KINGS & QUEENS I HAVE KNOWN

HÉLÈNE VACARESCO

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KINGS AND QUEENS I HAVE KNOWN

BY

HÉLÈNE VACARESCO

ILLUSTRATED

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TO THEIR IMPERIAL AND ROYAL MAJESTIES THE KINGS AND QUEENS, TO THEIR IMPERIAL AND ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCES AND PRINCESSES WHOSE NAMES, VISAGES AND WORDS ARE HERE CELEBRATED I DEDICATE THIS BOOK IN TOKEN OF DEEP GRATITUDE FOR ALL THE PERSONAL KINDNESS THE AUTHOR HAS RECEIVED FROM THEM

HÉLÈNE VACARESCO

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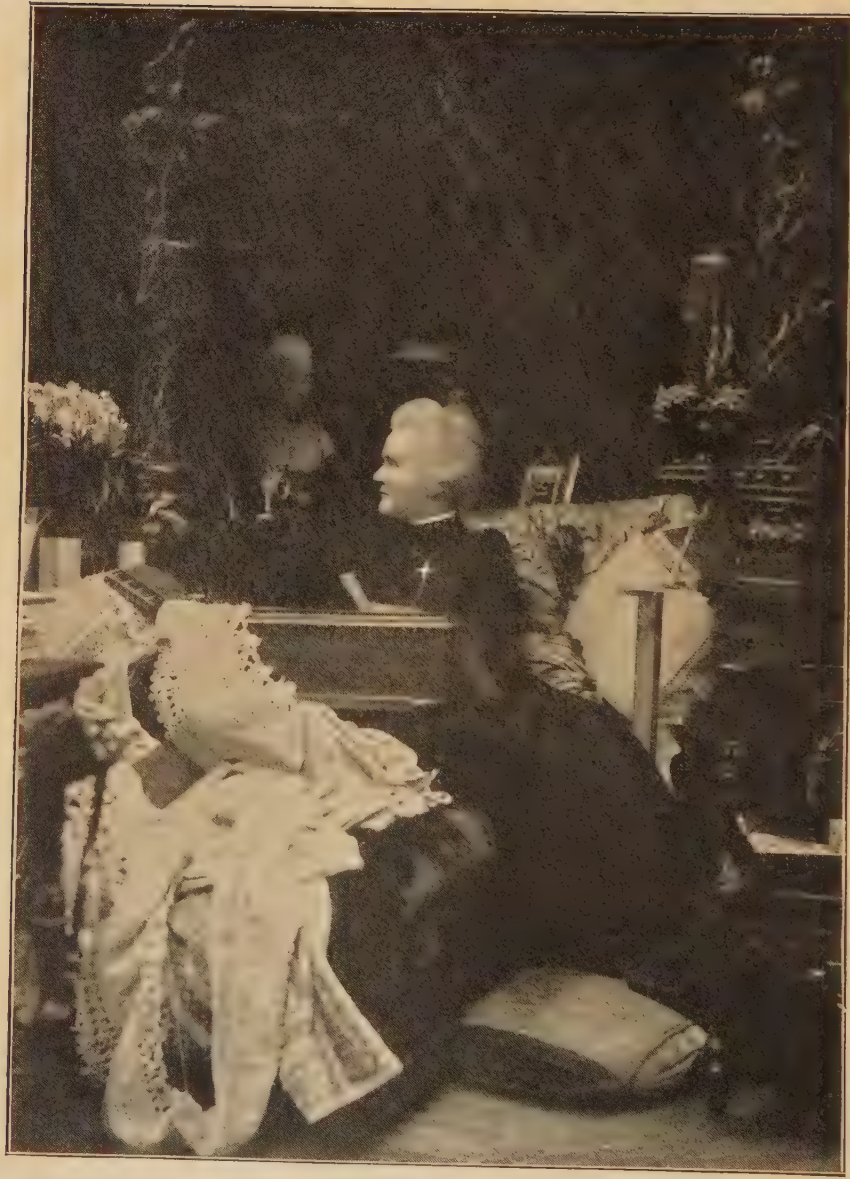

QUEEN ELIZABETH OF ROUMANIA (CARMEN SYLVA)

As far as the other Queens and Royal Princesses mentioned in my writings are concerned, I have had the honour of approaching them only at times when prepared for any striking impressions they might make. I carried into their presence a heart eager to receive all the emotions of the moment and a spirit aglow with desire to note as much, hurriedly as possible, from what might pass during such thrilling interviews. I have met almost all the reigning sovereigns of modern Europe and their Consorts, and have much to relate about them, since I soon became a keen observer of every Court I stepped into; yet, whatever I have said or thought of Kings and Queens I have known is derived from the experience of some transitory event, and gathered in the strained mood into which we are apt to fall whenever something extraordinary happens to us.

On the other hand, the image of the Queen of Roumania has shed a radiance over my whole life. From my earliest childhood, all that is good and

noble and true I have learnt to revere from her words and in her eyes. The beauty of nature and of human labour, the careful study of my own soul, piety, the joy dwelling in forms of harmony and grace, I have gathered from her as with generous hands she threw her thoughts like flowers in my path. To her I am indebted for my brightest hours, as for the love that lies hidden in days of gloom.

Were "Carmen Sylva" only a Queen and not a poet too, the study of her personality would prove a difficult task even to me who have spent so much time by her side and who am more intimately acquainted with her ideas and pursuits than her other biographers can be. These last are innumerable, but, different as each appreciation of their wonderful subject may appear, though they have seen her from widely varying standpoints, the same enthusiasm, sincere and thrilling, animates all their descriptions. And every one of these images is true, because Elizabeth of Roumania is an individuality so multiplex that almost any historian can offer at least an acceptable clue to the problem presented by such a soul. For instance, some are used to considering her in the light of a romantic Princess whose mistake it is to be, in our matter-of-fact century, a dreamer and a theorist as elusive as her own tales of the fairies that haunt the vine-clad mountains near the Rhine. Others have been accustomed to compare this all-absorbing Queen with the refined, cultivated ladies of the Italian Renaissance who still enthral our imagination as we

read about their grace, their love of beautiful poems and pictures; the fluent talk and harmonious verse whereby their Courts were rendered centres of intellectual activity. There is a third picture of her, where she is depicted in a wild yet familiar attitude, scouring the wide forests of the Karpathian mountains and listening with mingled delight and awe to the torrents amidst the rocks. And not one of these sketches, not one of these interpretations is untrue, because the Queen of Roumania in some degree resembles them all; she might even suggest a much larger number of illustrations and prove each of them to be a genuine portrait.

No living Sovereign may be said to fill the modern world with so much curiosity and admiration as does the Crowned Poetess, who will always to herself as well as to others remain a startling and divine enigma, a sweet and dolorous mystery. Endowed with every virtue that soars high in the domain of spiritual strength, the Queen is yet weak as a new-born infant when she has to struggle in the realms of reality. Thence terrible misunderstandings are apt to arise between her and those who judge her after their own custom of reducing spiritual processes to material action. The Queen is supposed to be good by nature, blind to evil by instinct, generous and forgiving in a spontaneous, facile way: few guess the real grandeur of such goodness, or from what warm source of human love and celestial aspirations the blindness and forgiveness spring. Every heart

lies bare before the clairvoyant eye, the quick, observant spirit, and severe struggles and long reflection are necessary for one who can succeed in giving to the result of moral labour so much apparently intuitive candour that it passes for that inborn, unwitting kindness to which no gratitude seems due. Every human soul may be called a silent battle-field; the artist's duty is to find the victors and the dead; and in my survey of the Queen's inward conflicts I have ever found indignation and desire of vengeance defeated, while sympathy, pity, and every quality that can make a woman royal daily triumphed in her breast.

The existence of Carmen Sylva in every moment of her busy days is divided between two conflicting forces, for ever waging war as to which shall obtain the upper hand. First, her calling as a poet with the fervent attachment she feels for every art and for an artist's life, then her duties as a queen. Hence while endlessly craving after leisure and day-dreaming, she is obliged to bestow unceasing attention on her words and smiles, her every gesture; full of desire to run headlong in the track of her imagination, she chafes under the necessity of restraint and must show indifference to all that most attracts her. And this everlasting strife, this enforced duality, has always prevented complete adoration from being accorded her by those who want her to be a perfect queen, as by those who wish her to be wholly given up to poetical talent.

The freedom of her tastes and opinions is in violent contradiction with the quiet manners, the subdued tones she is obliged to assume, and thus, bound to control the strongest and most audacious emotions, the Queen of Roumania is a living prey to the mingled elements of Fate.

No one will ever be able to tell whether queen or artist has suffered the more in this extraordinary blending of situations. Does the crown, besprinkled with a shower of rubies and diamonds, which once belonged to Josephine, wife of Napoleon I., weigh too heavy on her head, that she should take it off with such a sigh of relief, passing her slight hands through her hair as if to remove all trace of the massive symbol while yet her forehead is flushed from the exertion of wearing it? How often have I seen that crown rest on the bureau in her dressing-room, after an official dinner-party or ball; how often have I wondered whether its owner reproached it for keeping her so long from the cool peace of her private apartment! And then I have imagined the Queen also at times turning her wrath on the white sheets of paper and the long slender pen, of whose beckoning she has been aware while occupied in distributing her smiles amongst the expectant crowd gathered to witness one of those spectacles of pomp and dignity which they are ever happy to gaze upon. How often have I seen that splendid crown and the humble pen lie side by side in companionship so close that I could scarce remember they were

bitter antagonists, whose imperious demands filled a Queen's soul in turn with anguish and with awe. One special evening the Queen said to me :

"Oh, if that crown could only speak, what tales it would tell of the brief but splendid reign of Napoleon the Great, and of the thoughts of his Creole Empress, as her coquettish fingers lifted the ruby circlet to her brow ! "

" Nay," thought I, " if that crown could speak it would forget Josephine Beauharnais and the Tuileries and entertain us with tales of Carmen Sylva. Then perhaps we might realise that the artist would have been less ardent in the end had she not as Queen been perpetually conscious of robbing the hours that might have been given up to the pen ; that the Queen would have possessed less grace and majesty, were not her every endeavour stimulated by the knowledge that in accomplishing her task she was sacrificing a part of her very being."

The Queen's childhood was indeed a sad one, and on this period of her life she is apt to dwell, the tears often streaming down her cheeks as she recalls those dark days of trial and despondency. Weary years of seclusion by the side of her sick brother and her dying father did much toward developing the faculties of her wonderful imagination ; but the anguish, the feverish expectancy of joys that never came, all the glory and trials of a crowned consort, all the secret drudgery and apparent triumphs of her exalted place—none have been able to work an essential

change in the mind of the Queen. She remains still the impetuous, dreamy girl she was in her native castle by the banks of the Rhine, the childish princess who ran on the career of her fancies as fast as the waters carried past the windows of her palace the fleet boats whence laughter and music floated on the wind. To this moment the light in her eyes is as fresh and pure as in those days when her mother called her "my wild rose," and marvelled to discover how far the daring young spirit had travelled into the realms of fairy lore or history, and how glowing were the impressions caught by her youthful love of poetry and research.

The early home of Princess Elizabeth of Wied was, as I have said, darkened by the shadow of death. Her little brother Otto was slowly fading before her eyes, cut off from all the joys of his age by the awful malady with which he was born; while her father, the last roselike tint that dulls the sky before the sun is set, lingered on, and though growing more weary and feeble every day, still poured upon his child the treasures of his clear intellect and gentle heart. The soft splendour and hidden martyrdom of his gradual decline overspread all the days of her youth. "The image of my father," says the Queen, "stands immortal in the memories of every hour; when I remember my girlhood I cling to him yet. I cannot turn my head towards the past without seeing him. I thrust aside the branches of the big trees that surround our summer home. I perceive the big white

house as it glimmers amidst the foliage, and I am ready to run from one open window to the other and cast a hungry glance into each familiar room; but there is one window where I must ever stop, one spot to which my glance is chained. My father's window—my father's room! There he sits; his thin bluish hands are resting on his knees or on an open book, but his eyes wander far away or look deep into my own. The image of my father fills all the past for me. He was so learned that he believed many extraordinary things which make the ignorant man shrug his shoulders and laugh. He believed in miracles because creation and humanity were alike miracles to him. He felt humbled and dazzled before the power of life and the power of God, and, like a man seated at the confluence of two dashing rivers, he was placed between life and immortality, and looked upon everything with serenity and faith. At twilight the mighty forest would endeavour to sleep and forget the departure of the sun: then it was that he would call me to his side and talk to me. I watched his pallid face become whiter and whiter, like a cool stream where the moon is about to rise. On each of his sunken features death's sign was announcing that his frail being belonged to the tomb; but the calm strong spirit triumphed openly over death. How distinctly one could note that my dreamy, delicate Father came from an ancient race who thus completed in a being rich in thought and dreams, its long lineage of those who had won

distinction through great actions and gallant deeds. His blue eyes and his movements, graceful and flexible as those of a reed, revealed that he came from those old Border families who embody in their members all the strength and charm of their native Rhine. And his soul also resembled in beauty and vigour the light vine-crowned hills whose harmonious lines are reflected in the glittering river. My father was a real Rhenan Prince—not one of those princes history loves to celebrate, a lord eager to conquer and possess, but a prince who desired the realms of Heaven beyond all earthly good or earthly ambitions. In a land where the past survives only in the form of the horizon and the cities spread among the hills, he was like the last tendril of that past, and on the summit of his soul he bore the supreme flowers whose soft perfume had been accumulated by generations of heroes. In the wide range of thought he produced what his forefathers had produced in the domain of action."

Princess Elizabeth's mother was the eldest daughter of the Duke of Nassau, and sister to the present Duke of Luxembourg and the Queen of Sweden. Pretty, lively and intelligent, she had been brought up in the gay Court which flourished in that smiling land justly called the Garden of Germany. Its remains may still be found in the castle of Biebrick, a kind of German Trianon, once the centre of lively parties and entertainments; but since the departure of its sovereigns it rises like a phantom, and seems to

weep on the border of a deserted park, relating to the Rhine, that sighs in turn, all the festivities of the past. Very soon after marriage the life of pretty Princess Marie of Wied knew sorrow and trouble. After the birth of her eldest son and daughter Elizabeth, another son was born, a charming child, who from the hour of his birth was claimed by pain and suffering: he bore on his frail body an ever-open, ever-bleeding wound, and frequent operations were needed to prolong his martyred life. Queen Elizabeth has written a few tragic pages in which she relates the short life of the little Prince Otto, and the simple pathos of the narrative has given the book a high place amongst works dear to humanity as well as to art. Surely Prince Otto was a little saint. In all that Queen Elizabeth recalls when she tells of his oft-repeated tortures, his blankets ever soaked in blood, and his frame always shivering from contractions and pains, there is not a word which does not speak of patience and faith. The reader vibrates with revolt against Nature who could so cruelly mingle the sound of repressed sobs and deep grief with the gentle prattle of an infant over his first toys; who could bid the age of careless pleasure and happiness be for him the age of despair, though the child himself never despaired nor murmured reproach against his fate or his God.

Princess Elizabeth thus saw citadels of grief rise one after another and wall her in on all sides. She contemplated them with eyes full of eagerness and

tender curiosity, just as she watched the Rhine, and regarded the tall forests and the beautiful legends of their soil. But the accumulation of early sorrows in a youthful soul is like the mass of leaves that covers the ground in autumn: under the thick stratum of dead foliage, the sap of hidden plants is fermenting, waiting to spring forth in stems and blossoms. The perfume of spring mingles with the moist dull odour of decay, and when the April wind brings sunlight and shower, the dead leaves are pushed aside by the vigour of the blossoms that have grown under them. Thus a gush of sunlit breeze swept through the existence of Princess Elizabeth, and darkness and despair were for a time forgotten while her energy awoke to new life. Her maternal aunt, the Grand Duchess Helena of Russia, suddenly decided to take care of the distant young niece whom she equally pitied and admired.

"Send me your dear child," wrote the Great Duchess to the Princess of Wied. These words proved the Open Sesame which revealed a new world to Princess Elizabeth, and bore her far away from the dreary circle of home troubles.

"I cried bitterly as I took leave of my father, and he also shed tears, but mine were tears of hope, whereas he well knew that he would never see me again on earth. He liked the Great Duchess Helena, and he was charmed with my prospects of seeing new places and new faces; but his eyes looked a last farewell upon me as I tore myself from his trembling

arms, and a long time passed before I could get over the sad impression."

But afterwards the flashing splendours of the Russian Court, the attraction exercised on a glowing imagination by the fresh beauties and vanities which every hour brought under her eyes, chased the dark phantoms from her memory. She wrote to her father letters so cheerful and vibrating with life that when the dying Prince replied his daughter little guessed how high his pulse beat or how dizzy his brain felt while he was penning words of encouragement and wisdom.

"This Russia is such a dazzling, interesting country; the light of Asia seems to dwell upon the Imperial Court," wrote the Queen, in speaking of the two winters she spent in Petersburg. "The fairies and the moon-clad elves I loved so much appeared too shy to haunt my sleep while my waking hours were filled with such visions of magnificence and power. My aunt lived in her dead husband's beautiful palace, the Palais Michel, and entertained some two thousand persons under her roof, many of whom she had never even seen. The immense luxury with which she was surrounded in no way altered her simple tastes or the easy refinement of her manners, and she held that high personages should live with much outward pomp, since brilliant pageants and solemn ceremonies give pleasure to the public, counting as favours bestowed upon them by their sovereigns and princes. But it was the Great Duchess who

taught me to discover all the misery hidden under the folds of ermine-lined purple, and so convinced did I become of the truth of what she said, that had I then heard a prophetic voice say 'You will be a Queen!' I should have wept and trembled in despair. I know some of you may doubt or smile, as you perhaps believe that young Princesses fill their day-dreams with bowing multitudes, triumphal arches, crowns, sceptres, and royal trains. But you are mistaken. We possess an instinct that bids us beware. We know that these things may come, and we are afraid. But in general it is not Kings' daughters who become Queens. On the contrary, the less conspicuous among Royal Princesses are perhaps most exposed to the perilous fate. . . . The Great Duchess Helena, the Northern Juno as she was called, was a singularly strong-minded, good woman. All the practical qualities which I acquired and have since tried to display, I owe to her patient teaching; for instance, the unfailing interest I can show in and extract from individuals whose mere aspect repels and checks good-will. She has convinced me that no human creature exists who cannot be induced to speak eloquently, or perform good deeds. When she travelled, our temporary home at once became a centre of intellectual company and congenial spirits. With her I visited Paris and the French Court, Napoleon III. being at that time in the full glow of his splendour. I attended a great ball at the Tuileries, and saw the lovely Empress enter the great

reception-rooms by the side of the Grand Duchess, who, though already an elderly woman, looked more regal in her simple attire than the beautiful woman who walked arm-in-arm with her while murmurs of adulation and enthusiasm excited by her beauty followed her every step. 'You are exactly like a rose-bud,' said the Empress to me in passing, and although she repeated the compliment to every young girl present, the amiable words sent a thrill through my heart, as they reminded me of my mother's endearing name, 'My Wild Rose.' The French Empress left in my memory a vision of harmony and youthfulness which not all the following days, when I have thought with pity of her woes, have been able to efface. . . ."

On her return from Russia Princess Elizabeth of Wied found a tomb under the glossy lime-trees on the hill overlooking the Rhine. Her beloved father was dead, and from that moment the pain of his loss has been intermingled with every moment of her life; she has never kneaded anything with her hands as an artist which tears for her father's loss have not impregnated.

If I were writing the Queen of Roumania's whole life instead of trying merely to give a correct idea of her personality, I should be obliged to follow her step by step. This I have promised her majesty to do one day, and then I will tell you all that she has endured, and many things I have heard her say. At Venice one evening while we were both gazing upon the dim lagoon whence the last slanting rays of the

sun were fast departing, the Queen stretched out her arms towards the horizon, and said suddenly:

"No, no, no one knows, no one could tell like you what my heart and my thoughts contain. No one has seen all and felt my sorrows as you have done. The story of my life, divested of the errors entwined around it by others, my soul whose emotions and impulses you can note, and whose past I have shown you—promise me that they will be revealed by you one day, when the propitious hour arrives. You promise?"

"Yes, madam, be assured I will obey you, so help me God."

Like a blood-red necklace the purple tinge that darkened the twilight sky was sinking into the water, and the broad lagoon closed upon the setting sun. Thus do the waves of my heart hold enclosed the sacred promise which will one day spring to life and vigour.

I am convinced that Carmen Sylva's biographers, past, present and future, will one and all be angry with me for now destroying one of their favourite illusions, an innocent error, but still an error, which has been again and again recorded. The Queen of Roumania's marriage was no love affair. It is understood, of course, that all royal marriages are brought about by love, and when some one dares to assert the contrary he or she is at once accused of heresy. No sooner is a royal marriage announced than newspapers and magazines start a regular

steeplechase amongst them in associating the projected union with a medley of anecdotes, and they vie with each other as to which shall be most fortunate in securing thrilling accounts of the mutual love binding the happy couple. Why this absurd habit has taken hold of tradition I have never been able to find out. Do nations really desire to be ruled only by happy sovereigns and loving husbands and wives? If this idea does indeed exist, why not rather credit their kings and queens with virtues or qualities sufficiently attractive to render them capable of acquiring in the course of their married lives the love that it is not their lot to gain when they exchange their rings? I can truthfully assert that I do not know of more than one or two real love marriages between royal pairs, whereas I have seen many royal couples become extremely attached and even devoted to each other in the end, and in my opinion this result is more to their credit than if all the legendary romances which are circulated on the slightest rumour of an illustrious betrothal were true. The Queen of Roumania herself is always willing to relate how she became acquainted with her future husband, and how her marriage, without being in the least a romance, was from beginning to end treated in a very matter-of-fact way.

"I am afraid some writers have tried to make us out a very idyllic and rather ridiculous couple, and I still shudder when I read that old tale of the staircase, as worn and haunting now as a ghost story. I

have quite lost the courage to deny it, as it has been repeated so many, many times! . . . At Berlin, while on a visit to the Queen of Prussia, afterwards Empress Augusta of Germany, I had just caught a glimpse of the Prince of Hohenzollern, who is now your King and my husband. Then many years went past, finding me sad and despondent. My youth had been blighted by the presence of suffering and death, but my soul felt warm and rich with such impulses of self-devotion as would have made me an excellent nurse or an excellent mother. I longed to find some means of employing my suppressed energies, and lived on in the hope of seeing more of the world and its struggles. Many princes proposed to me at that time, but only one amongst all the potentates who sued for my hand tempted my fancy, though I had never seen him. He was a widower and the father of many children. Many children—I could immediately satisfy my heart's desire . . . But my mother was against the match, and the whole affair was dropped. . . . The Great Duchess Helena often wrote to my mother, and I learned afterwards that together they had laid out many plans for my future of which I was kept in complete ignorance. One day at Cologne, where we had gone to spend a few hours and listen to a Beethoven Festival, we met, by *mere accident*, as I was hastily informed by my mother, the reigning Prince of Roumania, Prince Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. We were staying that afternoon at the

Hotel du Nord which can be seen as the train crosses the Cologne station—I never pass on my way to Germany without remembering vividly every word of the interview there which settled my fate. I was very glad to meet the Prince of Roumania again, as he had been much talked about in my presence of late, and I knew he had won his way to the throne among political perils almost as great as the perils of war. He had crossed Austria in disguise because the Austrian Government had objected strongly to his election. In the small garden of the Hotel du Nord, where the beautiful towers of the cathedral threw their shadows upon us, I poured eager questions into his ears without even casting a glance at his refined and regular features, and he patiently answered every one of my inquiries. He told me about his difficult task, and about the exotic country that had become his own, its wide plains and savage mountains, its white-clad peasantry, frugal, grave, and endowed with weird powers of untaught eloquence and poetry. He spoke long and well, while I listened breathlessly, rapt in astonishment and delight. He described the great masters of the land, those boyards, cultivated yet barbarous in mind and customs, whose souls were alive with the blended charm of the Byzantine influence and the hot blood of old Latin descent. I envied the young sovereign who had taken up a sceptre whose maintenance required as firm a grasp as a sword, and I said to him openly : 'You are a happy man.'

"'And the concert?' asked my mother as we went up to our rooms. 'You were so impatient to go to the concert before we met the Prince.'

"'The concert?' I repeated in utter amazement. I had forgotten all about the concert! 'O Mother, you can't guess how deeply interesting, how thrilling is the conversation of the Prince of Roumania, and how I envy him his beautiful task! Just imagine, he rules a nation quite new to the world, but at the same time ancient in blood and history; and he has to understand them and to make them happy. A splendid mission indeed!'

"'Well, my child, that task, that mission, might be yours also. The Prince of Roumania wants to marry you. He has come here with the sole purpose of meeting you. This is no chance encounter, as you believe. You have but one word to say . . . . .

"I remained perfectly bewildered for a few seconds, then, as if urged on by the resistless impulse of my destiny, I answered:

"'Yes, I will marry him. I will help him and follow him to that wonderful land.'

"Half an hour afterwards the Prince of Hohenzollern came up to our private sitting-room. He kissed my hand as he entered, and my lips trembled timidly for one moment on his bowed forehead. Then he knew that he was my accepted future husband. This time he did all the talking himself: I was abashed and silent, but still intent on his every word. Not

one syllable of love, not one stray compliment, was uttered during those hours whose meaning has since thrown a light over my whole existence. Ours was no love marriage, but it was a union based on self-devotion, duty, and a fervent desire to do our best towards each other and towards the nation that I already loved.

"That very evening the Prince went back to Roumania; he was to return in three weeks and then take me back with him as his wife. Once he had gone, the spell was broken. I passed sleepless nights and restless days pondering upon the step I had so rashly taken, and wondering what the future would be by the side of one all but unknown to me in an unknown country, far from all my relatives and friends—so desperately far! I had seen so little of him. In my memory even his face and his voice were not clearly engraved, and for hours I studied his portrait and tried to read his soul in his eyes. What would the descendant of the stern Hohenzollerns be like in feelings and opinions, and would not mine startle and even offend him? In secret I was a poet already, and I had acquired, by frequent communion with clever people in my own home and the home circle of the Grand Duchess Helena, the liberal ideas of equality and democracy which nowadays bear the name of Socialism. I understood how startled the Prince of Roumania might be when he realised all this, since the chains of tradition were strongly entwined about his principles and the

traditions of his race, so that these reflections well-nigh appalled me."

But, had she reflected more deeply than she did at that period of her betrothed life, Princess Elizabeth of Wied would perhaps have discovered that there must exist in the soul of Prince Charles ground open to the influx of democratic feelings. She would have remembered that he was not only of a lineage high among the highest and proud among the proudest, a family made glorious by the great events of history; he represented not only the Hohenzollerns stern and brave, but also the glory and lustre gathered on modern battle-fields by warriors of humble birth if splendid renown, and that the strain of commoner French blood flows in the veins of Roumania's King. Only a few years before the beginning of the nineteenth century, his French great-grandmother, Fanny Mouchard, played a conspicuous and not always dignified part in the French Revolution, being mixed up with all the riotous people of the time. Her wit and amiability, however, with the fact of her becoming related to the Emperor through Josephine's marriage, won for her a position such as her birth and conduct alone could never have acquired. She often drove Napoleon wild with her off-hand manners and *évaporé* airs, with her habit of writing verse of her own composition, such as this :

> "Eglé belle et poëte hélas ! n'a qu'un travers
> Elle fait son visage et ne fait pas ses vers."

That this bizarre heroine should have become the

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mother of a line of Kings is one of the marvellous incidents of the epic-comedy played in France by the Revolution and the First Empire.

Again, the King, through his paternal grandmother, belongs to the stalwart peasantry of France, whence her finest heroes have sprung. His grandmother was a Murat, sister of the gallant King of Naples who, as every one knows, was once a stable-boy in a country inn of the Aveyron department. That inn still exists, and many are the travellers who stop there and dream about the wondrous fate of the stable-boy who became a King, only to die the death of a forsaken man at the Calabrian wells.

Thus the Queen might have been almost sure of her husband's sympathy. The great-grandson of Fanny Mouchard could not but love poets and poetry; the great-grandson of the Aveyron stable-boy must have inherited from his ancestor the democratic ideals which changed a Revolution into a Republic and then into an Empire.

Has Elizabeth of Roumania kept the promise registered in her heart on that early autumn day when she was first acquainted with her future husband and her fate? Now that so many years have gone by, her subjects, without a dissentient voice, can answer 'Yes.' From the moment of her arrival in her new country to this hour her life has been a constant effort, a constant labour of love on behalf of her people. Patiently and without ceasing she listens to the throbbing of their veins, to the wants

and aspirations of a race she has tried so hard to understand that she has almost become a Roumanian herself. When she reached the banks of the Danube, when before her dazzled sight white-clad peasants made their appearance, wearing carved silver knives in their belts and big peacock feathers on their high fur caps; when in brilliant costumes the women rushed forth to meet her, veils thin as the mountain mists floating round their proud features, and distaffs trembling on their bosoms; when the gaily attired village beauties danced the national dances before her to the sound of a rude violin; when dishevelled and ragged tziganes played tunes a thousand years old, yet fresh with the eternal youth of innocence, then Elizabeth believed her own life would be like an eternal *pastorale*. And at once she gave her heart to the rustic crowds whose welcome was showered upon her, who blessed her winning smile and her ready curiosity to learn more about them and their village homes. Remembrance came to her of the fair and simple Queens of the Iliad, who, seated in the midst of their waiting-maids, kept virgins and young matrons aloof from evil company or bad thoughts, by teaching them to weave, to spin, to twist golden and silken threads and sew stirring devices on banners destined for brave warriors or the altar. She bore in her mind that thus the ancient Roumanian Princesses and wives of illustrious boyards had reared around them damsels and dames of gentle blood, that while the spindle flew and the wind

carried the sound of bugle and church-bells, they had chanted ballads and had kept alive the memory of their glorious dead; and her poetic soul found joy in the resurrection of a noble past. No one will ever know or appreciate the whole extent of the labour that from morning to eve made her stoop towards the soil from which she drew the secrets of the race, or raise her head to the sky whence faith and inspiration descended upon her sacred toil.

When I met the Queen for the first time, or rather when I first approached her, I was quite a child. I had often seen her in the streets of our capital, and on such occasions, though only five or six years old, I felt a sharp sensation, as of mingled pain and joy, and all my small being vibrated to the shock. The flashing smile, the tender and compassionate blue eyes, the thick wavy mass of hair whose movement was as eloquent as the surging tide, and perhaps also the big white plume of the *chasseur* seated at the back of the carriage, floated before me like a vision of grandeur and delight, whose tracings left deep golden furrows in my mind. Children sometimes adore secret idols whose forms loom high above their playthings and dolls, and when playthings and dolls are quite forgotten, thought of the ruling god or goddess thrills their memory. At the dawn of my eighth year, having just escaped from an illness so dangerous that the doctors had given me up and I had remained as one dead for some hours, the Queen expressed a

desire to know the little girl who during six weeks had filled her parents' souls with fear, and interested the whole of Bucharest society, which at that time formed one large family. With shorn hair and trembling knees that could scarcely bear the frail load of my meagre body, pulling hard on my mother's hand, I mounted the great staircase of the Palace. I had completely forgotten in delirium and fever the radiant image which had enchanted my childish drives. How often now do I live again that happy moment when with panting breath and wild and eager joy that must have transfigured my pale face, I found the idol and I recognised the object of my earliest dreams. How clearly I can stir the chords of dormant sensations and revive the moist perfume of those vast rooms with green plants climbing along the golden trellis of a screen, or the soft murmur of the water splashing from a fountain whose waves rippled into a stone vase and fell among the leaves. But all the vivid hues of hangings and foliage seemed to concentrate themselves in a tall, slender form that stood in their midst. The Queen wore a moss-green velvet dress, and along the bottom of the skirt and round her sleeves and neck ran a trimming of downy grey feathers which trembled with every movement, every breath—I can see even now the fluttering of those silvery plumes. The radiant face stooped towards me; she opened her arms and I flew to her bosom like a young bird to its nest. Ah! had we known then what a pledge of deep affection was thus exchanged between

the royal lady and the child that death had almost carried away,—had we known all the love and the pain lurking in the dim future, would the grasp of my little hands round her neck have relaxed, would she have ceased kissing my thin cheeks? Notwithstanding all the pain that that future has brought, I can with truth say, No! and the Queen's answer is the same.

I remember every word of that interview, and how charmed she was because, when she wished to stop the fountain in order that I might hear the birds sing better, I exclaimed:

"Oh, please don't! I suppose the dear birds sing only to please the fountain, and they would feel wretched if its waters were hushed."

Then the Queen caressed my shorn head, and I told her with tears in my eyes how my long hair had been cut off with big scissors that made a shiver run over my skin; that mother had put them under my pillow, and how I caressed them.

"Never mind," answered Carmen Sylva, "you are a good little girl, and good little girls' hair grows very fast. You will soon get your long hair back again."

"But I love it—I won't have any other long hair because the hair that has been cut off might be grieved to see me loving other long hair."

The Queen laughed softly at these words, and murmured: "She is indeed a poet's grand-daughter."

After this visit a long time elapsed before I saw the Queen again; we went to Paris for my education,

and there several years were spent. When I had arrived at the age of sixteen, however, every summer found us spending three weeks with the Queen in the Castel Polesch at Sinaïa, a mansion built by the King, whose aspect presents a startling contrast to the surrounding landscape. The stern-looking German *schloss* looks like a challenge thrown defiantly to the mountains, whose dazzling heights overtop its turrets. The heavy edifice of grey stone and red brick proclaims that a strong will rather than artistic taste has been at work in the depths of the dark Karpathians. Like some mad anachronism, Castel Pelesch rises in the forest, a seal of taciturn power affixed to the wild beauty and primitive glory of its surroundings, the seal of the Middle Ages and the burgraves from whom the King draws his descent. In the interior the same silent war is waging between the decorations of the rooms and the personages who inhabit them. The contrast is such as the Crusaders must have created when in the sunlit palaces of Asia they strode through glittering halls to the silvery note of a hundred fountains in their steel armour and tall white plumes.

At that time a sense of logical and refined art was not mine, and to me the loveliness of the Sinaïa summer dwelling was unsurpassed. Even now, when I can judge of all its defects, I cannot dwell upon the sweetness of the spot and the spell it threw upon my mind without feeling again the thrill of pleasure and gladness with which I traversed its rooms and

gazed upon the rich Rembrandtesque colouring of wood and velvet. On the windows ballads and fairy tales appear in the deep purple and azure of stained glass ; near by a high waterspout rises and falls, whose voice is associated with so many emotions and dreams that it seems to sing its answering song to me. The Queen loved her mountain home, and lightly paced its crimson-carpeted corridors, lit up here and there with the twinkle of a golden star on wall or ceiling ; her white veil trailing behind her, beautiful and serene, she would talk in gay tones of the latest wish of her poet's or her Queen's soul.

At the age when youth leads us to the brink of every desire, at the age of ardent labour and gentle idleness, at the age when every event sinks into the depths of our being, I became the Queen's lady-in-waiting and companion chosen from amongst a large number, and beloved from that hour as if I had never been beloved before. This implied almost complete separation from my mother and family, to whom I was fervently attached, yet I scarcely wept, though I saw them weep, for the Queen's society, the Queen's words, the Queen's smiles meant all to me. Numberless are the entertainments, numberless the ties, the aims I have willingly given up for her, and never have I grudged the moments snatched from what others thought my duty ; I have regretted nothing, for to see and hear her, to have taken an active part in the activity of such a life, to this day forms the pride of my existence.

Many have loved the Queen—some for mere joy in receiving favours from a queen, some for her clear intelligence, her kindness, her gaiety. I loved her and love her still for the many hours I have spent listening to the outpourings of her spirit, watching her daring mind as it soared from one summit to another, borne on the wings of an imagination vivid and varied as the hues of a gigantic rainbow. At that time she led an existence which literally overflowed with activity and of which she lost not a second: and her splendid health allowed her to indulge in an exuberant extravagance of labour.

"But your Majesty is an intellectual ogre," said the great German sculptor Begag one day to the Queen, and in those few words he expressed the perpetual cravings for art and emotion which devour the Queen.

At Sinaïa the quantity of work, and especially of writing, she would achieve far surpassed what even the keenest amongst us could attain to. Many a time have I found her, at eight in the morning, seated in her dressing-room before a bureau covered with a huge heap of sheets whereon her bold writing had traced close lines, the lamp she had failed to extinguish at sunrise still burning by her side. Near the manuscript twenty letters would lie filling the grey envelopes on which, disdainful of royal crown or arms, the simple words "Carmen Sylva" were engraved in glossy black letters. White and slim in the folds of her snowy garments the Queen would rise, pass her

hand across her brow, as if to chase away the visions that had arisen there, and with a quick, impatient gesture, open the double doors that led to the balcony, letting in the fresh morning breeze, laden with sunshine and pine-wood fragrance. Wide awake to her duties as a sovereign, she would eagerly plunge her hands into thick masses of paper newly strewn on the sofa—requests, entreaties, desires, passionate demands for help, pity, or favour—that like a flood mounted each morning from the bosom of the nation to the heart of the august lady who was its ruler's spouse. With a look of scrutiny and unwavering concern she would examine and enter into all the details of the different matters presented for her decision.

"What did the two women you received yesterday afternoon want from me? Have you been able to discover why one of my ladies looked depressed while we were having tea, and did you inquire whether the medicine I had prepared myself and sent to the second footman, who seemed so fagged, has done him any good? And the porter's little boy—does he still suffer? Here is a book with large pictures and nice fairy tales for him—wait, I will write my name upon it—let him know it comes from *Mama Regina*—Mother Queenie. . . . I should just love to play one or two of Bach's preludes now, and even to sing a little, but we have so much work here, and it must be attended to. See . . . what does this poor prisoner require? Liberty, a breath of fresh air, I suppose. Oh! to think that there are captives on

such a day as this, when we drink so freely of the balmy air! . . . And this—this is from a widow—so wretched, so poor—and she has five children—they are actually starving—five children!"

A sigh, and the Queen turns her head away. I read her thoughts: "Five children and poverty, and I, who possess palaces and millions, had only one little child, and it was taken away from me."

But the saddening reflection is checked, the burning desire crushed, and the Queen toils through the morning's work with earnest care. Then suddenly she rises and steps across the compartment and comes back again—almost the only morning exercise in which she indulges. And while thus going to and fro, she stops from time to time, urged by her artist's instinct to move here a fold in the drapery, there a pillow on the arm-chair, or a picture in a bad light, with the result that every day her apartment wears a different aspect though the furniture remains the same.

A tray laden with grapes and figs lies on the corner of a massive *bahut*. The Queen would sometimes pull one or two out of the crimson or golden bunches and ask: "Don't you want some? They taste so fresh and are quite ripe." Then she returns to her literary pursuits, in which the thought of making Roumanian folk-lore and Roumanian valour known all over the world is uppermost.

"I am about to compose a ballad, and think I have caught a beautiful idea. . . . A young girl embroiders

a red sash for her betrothed, who has gone to the war. The sash must be so red that nothing in nature can be redder than it. So she takes the juice of all the red fruits, and the colour of the flames, willingly yielded up to her. At night an old woman comes and offers her a liquid as red as the flame and as the juice of fruit. She drinks it, but lo! at that very hour her betrothed is killed. The old woman was none other than grim Death, and it was the life-blood of the brave soldier she gave. But what shall I call the young girl? Dimistra, or Stana, rather. I cannot find quite the right name for her. Do search in an almanac, or in Alexander's legends. . . ."

"Pardon, Madam, but your Majesty will be late. It is almost one." These words are demurely said by the Queen's first maid, as the worthy dame lifts up the heavy curtains separating the boudoir from the bed-room.

"Nearly one, and we have such a lot of people to lunch! This is distressing. Run and dress, little girl, and tell all the others to dress quickly, as I shall myself"; and the Queen disappears in haste.

Through the wide corridors there is a rush and a scurrying, and we do not stop to breathe till we reach our chambers. Without a second's hesitation our maids dash forward, undress and dress us again in the space of a few minutes. They do their office so nimbly that the intricacies of Roumanian costumes are speedily vanquished, and we are amazed to find ourselves fully dressed before the mirrors in the

brilliant garb of village maidens, with spangled skirts and blue necklaces, while many-coloured flowers dance in our tresses.

We had scarcely taken our places in the large reception-room when the King and the Queen enter, the Queen dressed in the rich costume of a rustic matron, but on her lithe form the vestments took on an appearance of Byzantine pageantry, and she looked more like an Empress than a wealthy Roumanian dame. No one would guess that her day's task was not begun at that moment, nor could she have seemed more animated, more interested in the conversation of her neighbours at table, had she, instead of being awake with the lark, but just finished her toilet and commenced the irksome duties of hostess and Queen.

Two hours later, dressed in a short mountain costume of dark green velvet, she is scouring the pine-clad heights around the castle, running along the steep paths with step so light that it sometimes proved difficult to follow her. She would wander along the deep arcades of fir and hazel-trees, try to run as fast as the torrent, and taunt its laughing waters; then, when her forces were well-nigh spent, she would sit down on a well and gather us around her. Then she would open wide the portals of her soul, and speak of life and of all the people she had known and loved. Once I remember she told us about her first meeting with the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, who afterwards became her close friend.

"I was newly married and very shy. We went to pay a visit to the Emperor at Buda Pesth, in the old castle he inhabits when in his Hungarian capital. I was feeling quite miserable at the prospect of meeting the lovely, brilliant Empress, and I dared not lift up my eyes when her husband took me to her. When at last I did look, I discovered that the beautiful lustrous eyes were gazing into mine with an expression of timidity and distress equal to my own, and we smiled on guessing our common plight, and at once fell into easy talk. I liked her strange words and her strange ways, and she came to see me here. Just imagine, when she arrived at the station and saw the crowd that was waiting for her, she would not alight from the train! She hated fuss, and the King had to insist. Then when she saw our little horses —you know the dear yellow creatures that look exactly like the palfreys of Odin and Thor—she exclaimed:

"'I'll go on foot. I am afraid to go with those horses; I am afraid of driving in a carriage.'

"'But the castle is a long way off.' . . .

"'It does not matter.'

"I smiled to see this brave horse-woman terrified of my sturdy ponies, but on foot we had to go, followed by all the people, and feeling quite dismayed at giving our Imperial visitor such a welcome. Yet she liked it better than she would have done a gorgeous train."

After the strolls in the mountain forests we would

return to the castle, and then the Queen would assemble us in the music-hall, a lofty chamber, solemn and peaceful as a cathedral, where she read verse or prose aloud to us, and made the organ thrill beneath her fingers. Her ladies in dazzling attire would sit in an erect yet dreamy position on the high wooden chairs, listening till the rich sounds entered their hearts and made them images of fervour and rapt attention.

"To-day I will have nothing to do with all the others; to-day I belong to Beethoven," she would say. "Can you understand his remaining so open to human passions when he was so near to God?" Then after Beethoven had given us the keenest pangs of his genius, Carmen Sylva would take up a book, and in her mellow, harmonious tones let stanza after stanza drop on our delighted ears. And the evenings of these glorious days were calm and sweet. They brought us moments Carmen Sylva consecrated specially to each of us in turn. She encouraged us to speak of what was nearest to us, our homes, our family affairs, our hopes and difficulties; she guided and counselled us; she drew us out so that each in turn could have sworn that the Queen had been peculiarly touched by her conversation.

Court life and society have such an established reputation for scandal and intrigue that they seem beyond redemption, and this much I must admit, that in Carmen Sylva's *entourage* falseness, back-biting and ill-will are ever at work and ever finding

a new victim. Carmen Sylva is perfectly aware of everything that takes place around her ; she is awake to the slightest manifestation of spite amongst her companions, but she holds her head high above the abyss whence the angry murmurs arise, and by dint of appearing to ignore the presence of evil, she succeeds in destroying its near effects. She is by no means naturally of a forgiving disposition, but her reason and the rectitude of her heart have taught her that a Queen cannot exhibit rancour without descending to the same level as those who have merited her anger. She has achieved a victory over herself in never punishing an offence inflicted by jealousy amongst those she loves, but she tries hard to enlighten the weakened conscience as to its failure and to punish the guilty only by showing them how disgraceful are their faults. In acting thus, Carmen Sylva seems to indicate that she has to deal only with refined natures and high characters merely a little spoilt by pride or envy. This, alas ! is not always the case.

Accustomed to find her own emotions in the pure domain of spirituality, the Queen imagines that in inflicting spiritual punishments or granting spiritual rewards she has done her best towards ensuring justice. I have often been the mute and amused spectator of such deeds as have proved the grandeur of her nature but sorely disappointed those who expected some material recompense. In the same manner she would act when displeased. One time

a young girl amongst the maids of honour had won from her Royal mistress, who had been almost a mother to her, marks of disapproval, and I had often noticed how worried the Queen felt by the conduct of the unruly damsel. She did not scold but looked grieved, though this did not suffice to keep the culprit away from the forbidden ground.

"Oh, I am going to punish her—I have found such a punishment for her. I am going to be a wicked, wicked Queen." These words, though said in mellow tones, made me tremble, as I had never heard her speak thus, moreover, her Majesty went about with such a mysterious air that I more than once begged her to spare my young companion, but she only went on saying tenaciously to the tune of a nigger song: "A wicked Queen, a wicked revengeful Queen." My curiosity and my anguish increased. I could not discover what the terrible vengeance was to be or when the dreadful day prophesied by the "wicked Queen" would come.

And when it did come, oh, shall I ever forget the humiliation of that hour! "Here is my vengeance," said the Queen, and she raised in her uplifted hands a large sheet of paper. "A letter," I thought to myself, "a dismissal, cruel indeed, and harsh," and tears rushed to my eyes as I thought of the rash girl, a lonely orphan, who would be torn from luxury and affection, and sent out again into the dreary world. I waited in dumb silence.

"I have been sitting up for twelve nights to get

it ready sooner and make it more beautiful. Look." And she placed the large paper on my knee. It was an immense piece of parchment on which she had daintily painted miniature pictures representing scenes from the New Testament: these formed a frame round the text written in golden letters.

"Oh how she will feel the scourge and bitterness of my wrath," said the Queen, "and how she will repent when she finds out that while she was giving me such dire trouble I was working for her, I was toiling for the benefit of her soul. This will prove her greatest treasure on earth. It is the Sermon on the Mount, the Divine lesson preached by our Saviour himself. But why do you kneel? Yes, the pictures are small, you are short-sighted."

"Very short-sighted, Madam, and I must see every one of them," and I went on looking at the beautiful painting and the gilded text. The Queen little guessed that I was kneeling before her own beautiful soul that now stood revealed in all its splendour before me.

Carmen Sylva, who sometimes laughingly calls herself "Donna Quixota," takes a real pleasure in humiliating her enemies by the generosity of her forgiveness. Thus she says: "I am not as good as I appear, I assure you. I am exactly like the Pope's mule in that charming little tale of Alphonse Daudet. The mule only kicked her foe seven years after he had inflicted bitter injury upon her. I kick—after seven years' silence and sometimes

more—but I never kick vigorously. My favourite vengeance is a very harmless one. I force people to act as they speak, to live up to their principles; I take every word they say for a sincere expression of their desires. This means some cruelty on my part, because in our presence they don not only their best dresses but their most high-flown sentiments. They give vent to a lot of noble aspirations which are carefully put aside in everyday life. The most frivolous young dame pretends she loves solitude, books, and the company of her husband and children; the ambitious tell me that they simply desire modest incomes and a place of quiet retirement; so whenever I am able to do so I give the giddy young woman an excellent opportunity of looking carefully after her home and spending studious afternoons; I force the ambitious man to content himself with the joys of the existence whose charms he described to me." But the Queen makes a great mistake when she declares herself capable of hurting a human soul; this I have never seen her do either by act or word, and she is absolutely good, good to such an extent that those who feel really attached to her are often wont to be more indignant with her equanimity than moved by her unspeakable kindness.

The Queen's constancy to her friends is absolute, no one can undo her attachments, and she remains faithful to those she loves even when she has not seen them for years. One of the great secrets of her deep affection for me—an affection which the

Queen has been pleased to call one of the most fervent in her life—lies in the comprehension I gained of her peculiar habits of mind. From the very beginning of our intercourse I understood that the only means of keeping up the warm interest she showed me lay in the trouble I took to put aside all personal animosities and never to mention any one in her presence as having done a bad deed or as being distasteful to me. She has never been able to suspect me of a pang of jealousy or fit of ill-will towards my equals or my inferiors. For this effort to resemble her in some way, for the perpetual strain imposed on my feelings and aversions, I have been thanked and rewarded a thousand times by the acknowledgment and appreciation of the Queen.

"I bless you, my child," she said one day, and she crossed her slim fingers upon my head, "I bless you because you have never cut off a single ray of warmth and light that I have poured out of my heart." And of this I may truly declare that I am proud, for have I not respected in the Queen's soul all the errors of her beautiful altruism, all her ideals, however dangerous I may have found them, however certain I might have felt that they were being imposed upon her by impostors and mischief-doers?

In every life there is generally one predominating misfortune, one ruling pain in which all other misfortunes take their source, and by which every intervening pain is fed. The tragedy of Carmen Sylva's life dates from a day when the winter dawn

was about to gild the roof of the Royal Palace in Bucharest. The oppressed city was not sleeping, it felt an infant's heavy breathing lie on its bosom and the breasts of thousands heaved with fervent prayer. All the land was praying that the Royal child might be saved, and the parents spared the awful anguish of losing her. And in the room where the first glimmerings of the March morning penetrated, by the bedside of her darling the mother knelt and whispered: "My God, my God, can'st Thou not spare me the bitterness of this bitter hour? I know that this is Passion Thursday; all over this land, with the prayers that go up to Thee for my child's life, we pray Thee to remember that on this very day Thou suffered for us and wept as I now weep, and wiped the drops from Thy brow as I now wipe them from mine. Wilt Thou take her from me? Must I lose her? My God, my God, Thy will be done, and yet, and yet it seems too hard."

And as the mother spoke, the dying child murmured softly: "It is *so* sweet, so beautiful, Mother dear. I see a garden and all the gardens I have loved, all the gardens of this darling land, I see them . . . . I am so thirsty—bring me water from Sinaïa—show me the tapering towers of the Cotrocius Church—they are like spiders . . . . I am so happy. O my darling, darling Roumania!" And the child went forth into the gardens that she saw and drank from the source of Eternal Life the cool mountain water for which she thirsted.

The red tinged hour of dawn had now spread its glory over the bewildered city. The day was indeed a Passion Thursday, and the nation who were mourning for their God mourned also over the little child they had loved so well that no other Royal child will ever reign in our people's heart with the same supremacy as did "Little Princess Marie." The small vivacious body, whose lightness and glee had been in the eyes of all like a sun-ray dancing on the water; the pure angelic head where masses of golden hair rippled; the fragile dwelling of a marvellous bright soul, were laid to rest on the summit of a hill within Cotrocius Park where she had loved to play. There in the bosom of the earth, whose slumber is ever lulled by the distant murmur of the town, a chapel was built wherein a marble statue reposes showing the rounded limbs, the small feet whose steps wandered such a short time in the gardens of life, the eager little hands which gathered so few flowers among the flowers of earth. On the grassy mound outside a white cross throws its straight shadow, and on the shadow of that cross Queen Elizabeth's heart is crucified. Like the green mould cut in twain by that shadow, her heart is cut in twain by the form of that simple cross. Her bosom bears the load of that stone, and the little mound of Roumanian soil where her child is buried rises high before her eyes, higher than the highest mountain, till it has hidden all the future from her view.

But, armed with desire to be stronger than the

strength of her fate, the Queen has lived on and done her duty as if from that hour all her hours had not been void of hope and light; as if the smiles fond mothers lavish upon their children and receive from them again did not sink as deeply into her wounded flesh as the form of that heavy marble cross which lies so cold upon her life. She to whom such a portion of human bliss has been denied, has at least tasted all the savour of heroism and mute despair. Sometimes it seems to have made her seek the means of suffering more and more.

"Oh, the first children's ball at which I presided after her death—scarcely one year after! Oh, the music of that ball—it whirls yet in my memory. The pattering of the little feet struck on my heart like a rain of fire. And I held my arms open and the little children came to me and nestled in my bosom. Each of them reminded me of her—one had her way of kissing, another almost spoke with the accents of her voice; yet in each of them I missed her grace, the smile, the vivacity which were her own. Oh, I was meant to be a mother! I was created to create a human creature, to sustain and love a human soul derived from my own soul. I see nothing in nature or in living beings that is not destined to be continued and to love itself in another being born of its own essence."

We often spent hours, the Queen and I, at the top of the small hill where the chapel rises, above the gardens open to the last dying blasts of winter winds

or the first warm breezes of summer. On such occasions the Queen would silently point out a bench to me, whilst she stayed beside the mound cut in twain by the shadow of the cross. The crows shrieked madly around us, the din of the city mounted like the murmur of a lazy sea, and the fitful clamour of bugles and trumpets rose lightly on the air. In the circular path that winds thrice round the tomb the Queen walked slowly, looking into her own heart and unravelling the Past.

"To think that I have been that happy woman who was a mother while she lived. To think I was almost the same as I am to-day, and I walked towards her with these same feet that now carry me to her tomb, that I held her little neck with these same hands that now stoop towards the dust where she reposes. To think I was that woman I see in the Past who held her little girl on her knees and showed her the sun and the moon and the carriages in the streets—I was that woman, and I did not scream aloud with joy! . . . Oh! I know she is not here—she is where mystery abides and supreme bliss, and yet she is here with me, she is in me as much as in the days when I bore the happy weight of her unknown sweetness."

Apart from the sadness ever reigning in her soul, Carmen Sylva is cheerful, while the force and resistance of her nerves is astonishing. She brings to bear upon everything that comes in her way a most astounding amount of interest, pity or enthusiasm.

In a word, she represents the most constant human vibration that womanhood may boast of. Her powers of absorption and production are equal. When she listens to music it is wonderful to note on her face the sensations roused in her soul by the different instruments till she herself becomes a part of the harmony expressed.

Most of the Queen's misfortunes have been due to her ignorance or disdain of the rude realities of life ; yet whenever she has had to face them, she proved a match for circumstances whether dreadful or pleasant. During the 1877–78 Russo-Roumano-Turkish war she proved an admirable sister of charity, tending the wounded with the same care as the professional nurses who aided the surgeons in the dreary hospital wards. One bright autumn afternoon, as we were sitting round the Queen while she painted some Biblical scene in a small prayer-book, she was brought to talk of the days when she first began her apprenticeship as a nurse.

"I was at home anxiously waiting for news from Plevna. All at once some one rushed in and said: 'They have arrived!' 'Who? New soldiers going to Plevna?' 'No, the wounded, those who have been cured and those who must die.'

"I immediately understood that my help would be necessary. In a few moments I had caused all the wine that was in our cellars to be taken to them, and had my own sleigh piled with counterpanes and pillows and all I could secure in the way of wrappings.

It was a bitter afternoon. The snow fell in large heavy flakes as our horses travelled swiftly, and the blast cut our eager, trembling faces. . . . Oh, the frightful scene that we saw when we reached the hospital! All the yard was full of carts whence the poor sufferers were being borne up-stairs—some of them lay on the steps and moaned—blood was spreading over the newly fallen snow. Surgeons and nurses went from one group to the other. I followed them. . . . A little later we had succeeded in establishing a long row of beds in the upper hall, and here I worked as hard as the others, so that the wounded soon considered me as a nurse. Rank and etiquette were quite forgotten. Very often my dress was stained with the same blood that had been so freely spilt on the Bulgarian plains, and my shoulders were often sore from uplifting the heads of the dying. O poor, poor children! How many of them I saw depart; and while I gently crossed their hands on their bosoms I would think of the anxious mothers and wives awaiting them in the snowy villages afar off and with weary fingers counting the days of that woeful winter which took so many heroes away."

While the Queen was speaking, the glorious beauty of that autumn afternoon had reached its climax. All around, as far as the eye could see, light danced upon the sunlit branches and into the dazzling mountain wells. A strong perfume came from the earth and the trees, and the force of the Roumanian

soil was in that perfume, and while the Queen spoke it seemed to answer :

" Blessed be thou, O Queen ! Can my children ever forget those days when thou wert a mother to them ? Wilt thou ever cease to be thy people's Mother, a Queen beloved amongst all other Queens ? Blessed be thou for the red drops that decked the snow-white purity of thy dress, blessed be thou for the sacred bruises the heads of the dying pressed into thy gentle bosom. What Queen of the Past or what future Queen will be through history alike unto thee, O blessed Queen ! "

KING EDWARD VII

THE arrival of a Royal visitor at a foreign Court is always an event of much importance, especially if, as in the case of King Edward's visit to Roumania a few years ago, the illustrious guest be unknown to the august couple who are to entertain him during several days. Moreover, the Prince of Wales, as he then was, had chosen a season when the presence of foreign Sovereigns at our Court was unusual, and the problem was a hard one—how to make him spend his time pleasantly in the summer residence of the King? Of course, the usual official programme would have to be adhered to, but our Queen felt strongly that the Prince of Wales should be received with some novel form of entertainment, so that he might carry back with him a pleasing recollection of a country whose situation and destinies had hitherto been so widely different from those of all other European nations. Besides, her Majesty was always anxious to spare her fellow sufferers—that is to say Royal Princes and Princesses—the monotonous process of seeing the same festivities everywhere, and thus gathering from their travels little genuine delight.

On the other hand, we did not know much about the Prince of Wales, although we had read frequent descriptions of his tastes and habits. But as we were all aware that a Prince's character is familiar only to those who approach him daily, and that there is little reliable information to be gathered on this subject from newspapers and reports, the heir to the English throne was quite a stranger to us. No one could tell what kind of entertainment would be most agreeable to one who had seen half the world, who had visited India, and spent several months every spring in the French capital. When asked to give my opinion of the arrangements made for the Prince's visit I was much perplexed, and I was reduced to declaring that to my mind nothing seemed more natural or more courteous than to pursue the usual course—that is, to offer his Royal Highness as many excellent dinners and gorgeous luncheons as he could swallow during his short stay, show him a fair number of military pageants, take him for as many walks and drives through the beautiful forest as he would care to undertake, and then close the whole series of receptions by a big party. Moreover, the weather was sultry, though October was at hand. The Prince would certainly feel grateful for not being put out by new arrangements, and would no doubt prefer the familiar, though monotonous, formalities with which he had been acquainted since his childhood.

The Queen looked daggers at me as I wound up by saying that we should probably discover also that

we were all incapable of inventing anything new or attractive enough in the way of theatricals, dances, or picnics. Her Majesty immediately arose and declared that, if the heat had deprived us of all our initiative and courage, she herself was not disposed to fall asleep or to allow the Prince to find his sojourn in Roumania dull and tedious. In vain I argued; in vain I pointed out that the date of the Royal visit came close upon the day when the Queen was due at the manœuvres, where the King specially desired her presence; in vain did I try to prove how delighted the Prince would be by the surrounding landscape, by the wildness of the rocks and mountains under their floods of golden sunshine. The Queen's face wore a look of determination whose meaning I could guess.

I did not, therefore, feel astonished when next morning, a few minutes after sunrise, I was summoned to her apartments. For these early interviews the Queen was in the habit of striking a few notes on the piano, and, as my sitting-room was situated just above her Majesty's boudoir, I immediately obeyed and ran downstairs. The Queen was standing in the middle of the room, her face full of joy.

"Eureka!" she cried. "Oh, I am *so* pleased. I have hit on such a beautiful idea! And without your help, too! On the contrary, you lazy thing, you tried to thwart and discourage me. But now I will have my own way."

"And what is this marvellous idea, madam, may I ask?"

"Tableaux vivants."

"Tableaux vivants?" I repeated, in a subdued voice, yet in tones of respectful criticism.

"Yes, tableaux vivants."

"But the Prince of Wales must have seen thousands of tableaux vivants in his life."

"Don't be silly! These tableaux vivants will be quite unlike any he has ever seen, or any one else either."

I failed to understand and said so.

"Wait till I explain. The tableaux will represent a charade, and the initials of the words of the charade will be our guest's own title—'Prince of Wales.' The subject of each tableau will begin with one of the letters of those three words. There are thirteen letters in the words; therefore you will have thirteen tableaux, and a fourteenth which will represent the Prince of Wales himself, or one of his predecessors, because all the subjects of these tableaux will be taken from the history of England or from English fiction. Now go back to your room and let me work."

In the calm solitude upstairs, where I could look out upon the neighbouring forest, whose dark green foliage was already reddened by the twofold colour of the autumn leaves and the sunlight striking softly down the sloping glades and pathways, my first care was to take down the two volumes of Macaulay's "History of England" and cast a glance over their

engrossing pages. But my search, though careful, was without result, as I could find no personages who seemed suitable for parts to be played in our projected tableaux. As I let the books fall upon the carpet, and was about to turn to some other occupation, the Queen, whose light tread I had not heard, appeared at my side, holding in her outstretched hands a heap of papers on which her firm, bold writing had traced something which resembled nothing so much as a plan of battle.

"Look here! Each tableau will represent an episode from one of Shakespeare's plays. See! All the initials of the names will form the letters of the three words 'Prince of Wales': Perdita, Richard III., Imogen, and so on. Now, telegraph to all the people who are likely to accept our invitations. Here is also a list of the people I want you to ask to help us. Tell them to come to Sinaïa by the next train. There is no time to lose."

"And the manœuvres, madam? I suppose your Majesty intends to give up the manœuvres?"

"By no means. I never give up an iota of what I deem my duty—we shall be able to arrange everything beautifully, I assure you."

"And what says the King?"

"The King allows us to arrange the performance, but under one condition—rather a severe one. He must totally ignore our doings; the official life of the castle must remain perfectly undisturbed, and when the Prince of Wales arrives, should he feel at

all fatigued, the representation must not be even mentioned. The tableax vivants are not to be put down in the official programme. 'Dura lex, sed lex,'" said the Queen; and she sighed softly.

I was quite taken aback, not to say terror-stricken, at these words. If the Prince's curiosity should fail to be awakened, our plans, our labour, which I imagined might prove hard, would be perfectly useless, and I vowed to myself that in some way such a catastrophe could and should be avoided. The great day was fast approaching. First was to come the Queen's visit to the vast plain where the manœuvres took place. Then the King's intention was to proceed to Bucharest and show his capital to the Prince of Wales. Afterwards the Prince was due at Sinaïa, where our grand reception was being prepared.

While the train was briskly carrying us to the field of the manœuvres we were—both the Queen and myself—absorbed in thought, deep and serious indeed, but in no way connected with military pursuits. On one side of the carriage stood the King, surrounded by generals, colonels, and equerries-in-waiting, expounding the merits of a new cannon or a new gun. On the other side, but a few steps apart, the Queen was exchanging with me such typical remarks as these: "Has Mr. V—— received his wig?" "Miss Z—— does not hold her head well; and the flower in her hair should be red, not blue." "We must tell Othello to look just a little bit more savage."

A couple of minutes in a swift landau brought us on to the plain, where bayonets and sabres were glistening under the glare of the scorching sun. But neither the sound of trumpets echoing from hill to hill, nor the mad rush of cavalry, nor the roar of the cannon could divert our minds from their preoccupation. Flags waved, shrill commands pierced the sultry air, regiments were poured like water from the distant horizon till they reached the landau where the Queen sat waiting and waving her handkerchief, but we saw nothing before our eyes save the little theatre where, even during our absence, the improvised actors were busy. Even when the Queen followed the King along the pathway opened for the Royal pair amid the cheering soldiers, the Queen, without ceasing for one moment to bow and to appear interested in everything she saw, turned to me and muttered: "We have no Falstaff yet. Do try and discover among your acquaintances some one who might be a good Falstaff. I am afraid we shall not be back before evening, but I hope they are doing their best without us. But it *is* annoying to have been compelled to leave the castle on the eve of such a day. Now, I suppose, we shall be obliged to sit up the whole night."

Towards twilight the Royal train bore us back to the castle, while the King proceeded to Bucharest. Slowly in the soft haze of the evening light we ascended the steep route: a cool wind was rising, and the new-born moon floated in the gorgeous

autumn sky. Between the station and the castle, notwithstanding the pace at which the postillion was driving his four stalwart horses, we found the road long, and gave a sigh of relief as the castle, illuminated like some fairy vision, at last burst upon our sight. The postillion sang a wild song, and joyful greetings came from trumpets and voices to tell the sleepy mountain forests that their Queen was returning to them under the rays of the young moon.

We stop upon the threshold—the huge doors are wide open—the Queen suddenly arrests her steps, and an exclamation of amazement and delight falls from her lips. I follow quickly upon her heels. The sight she beholds is a glorious one indeed, and one which I shall never forget. There in the high hall, where knights in armour form a range of spectators against the gilded walls, all the glory, all the glamour of the past seems to rise before our dazzled eyes. There is Mary Queen of Scots, and quite close to her, heedless of all anachronism, seeing that she is but the daughter of a poet's dream, there is Perdita. Here Richard III. stands grim and resolute, while Shylock turns a friendly smile upon him. Cleopatra, in gorgeous robes of purple and yellow, walks hand in hand with Oberon ; the gay group of the Merry Wives of Windsor cluster round King Lear, and Cordelia leans upon the arm of Mary Tudor. In the case of two of the tableaux we have been obliged to abandon Shakespeare for Schiller

and Victor Hugo; thus is explained the presence of Queen Elizabeth, Mary Stuart, and Mary Tudor.

As "Carmen Sylva" had foretold, we slept very little that night. When I went up to my room, instead of seeking repose after the awful fatigues of the day, I had to sit down and compose the French verses to be recited before each tableau; and the first grey streaks of dawn decked the sky before the final stanzas were committed to paper. Overcome by weariness, giddy and dazed, I fell asleep and dreamed of a vast battlefield, through the expanse of which a man dressed in glistening red armour rode at full speed. I awoke to hear bugles and trumpets sounding a shrill march under our windows. The troops in the castle were now astir. Already in the hall my companions, dressed in crisp white muslin, were awaiting my arrival, and were afraid that I might be too late. "Make haste! make haste!" they cried: "we are soon going to the station." It was even warmer than yesterday; the night had brought no coolness. How we pitied the unfortunate Prince, who had to travel and perform so many wearisome details of etiquette in such a furnace! "It will remind him of India, perhaps," we said. "Let us give him flowers and look our gayest; the sight of white dresses, joyous faces, and bright flowers may refresh him."

The arrival of the Prince took place in the usual manner, to the accompaniment of music, military salutes, speeches, and official greetings. We were

all presented to the heir of Queen Victoria, and we noticed that he looked courteous and pleasant in spite of the circumstances. Then we were immediately told that the Prince would lunch and take tea with the King and Queen, and that we should see nothing of him before dinner. So we had the whole afternoon to ourselves, and great was our delight when we returned to the quiet of our cool apartments and felt free to taste a few hours of well-earned repose.

My dog, a beautiful yellow setter, lay stretched on the carpet at my feet, and my mother was sitting on the threshold of the balcony, intent on a piece of dainty embroidery. Ada (that was the dog's name) did not inhabit the Royal stable, but was a daily visitor there. We were now, however, anxious to keep her from running about the staircases and perhaps meeting the King, to whom her presence might cause annoyance. But on that particular afternoon Ada looked the picture of utter laziness and comfort, and her golden eyes gazed at us with an air of perfect tranquillity and content. We little guessed the important part she was to be called upon to play, and were chatting about the reception and the Prince of Wales, wondering whether in the end he would express any desire to see the tableaux vivants. "It *is* a shame," I was saying, "that the Prince should be unaware of all the worry the rehearsals have caused. I am convinced that he would insist on seeing the representation if he only knew——"

I had not time to finish the sentence before Ada darted towards the door, pushed it open, and rushed along the corridor, followed by our distressed but vain appeals. "Ada, come back!" we cried; "come back instantly!" We dared not call too loud, because the castle was plunged in absolute stillness; but we followed the truant downstairs, and arrived in time to see her throw herself down at the feet of a gentleman dressed in a plain grey suit, who was smoking a cigar at an open window, and whom I mistook for one of the Prince's equerries. The dog began to overwhelm the unknown gentleman with caresses, and I must say that her impertinence seemed to give him pleasure. Suddenly he cast a glance upon us as we stood panting and aghast before him, and he immediately took in the situation.

"You want to get this beautiful creature back to her room, do you not? Please let me help you. Dogs are fond of me, and perhaps even this one will obey me better than you."

There was so much easy grace and composure in the tone in which these words were spoken that I felt startled, lifted my eyes to the stranger's visage, and recognised the Prince of Wales!

I made a low curtsey. "Miss Vacaresco, if I am not mistaken," said his Royal Highness; "and this is Madame Vacaresco, your mother, I am sure, for you are so very much alike."

And as I expressed my surprise that the Prince remembered my name, which he had heard men-

tioned only once that morning at the station, he said, "I have an excellent memory—a real treasure for a Prince. Now, Ada, go back with your mistress. You *must* go back; I am accustomed to be obeyed. You have seen me, caressed me, delighted me—you are one of the smartest young ladies I have met. Is not that compliment enough? Now go back." And with quiet authority the Prince touched the dog's collar. Ada, as if mesmerised by the words and action, crept back to her place by our side and seemed willing to follow us. So we had nothing more to do but to thank and curtsey, and leave the Prince to his reverie and cigar. He extended his hand, and we were on the point of retiring when, with some hesitation, the Prince advanced again toward us.

"There is something I want to say to you," he said. "This is—I must call it so—a most fortunate incident. I see you love dogs. I have a dog here with me—my little Beatie, whom I call Beatie 'the Traveller,' because he always accompanies me on my journeys. But now the poor little thing is an invalid. Will you come and see him? He is lying in my sitting-room. His paw was caught in the door of the railway-carriage, and he has suffered dreadfully. He has had to be left a good deal alone, and he loves society."

The Prince opened the door of his large, comfortable sitting-room, and here little Beatie came to meet us and make friends with Ada. The animal,

a charming white lupetto, limped badly, and his paw was carefully bandaged.

"Could you not let Ada stay with him while we are having tea?" inquired the Prince.

"Certainly, sir," answered my mother. "Besides I can remain here with them, as I do not care much about functions and official receptions."

"Ah!" replied the Prince, "What would you say if you were in *my* place?"

Beatie was now on my knees, and feeling quite at home with us. A sudden inspiration seized me, and I began to talk to the dog. "Does Beatie know that we have prepared a beautiful series of tableaux vivants for Beatie's master to enjoy, and that, if Beatie's master does not express his desire to see them, the tableaux will not be represented, and we should feel very disappointed indeed?"

These words, apparently idly said, seemed to be as idly listened to, but when, a few hours later, we saluted the Prince of Wales downstairs, I noticed that the Queen's brow wore a gleam of triumph, and she said: "You know, my children" (she always addressed her young maids-of-honour as "my children"), "the Prince says he has brought a very clever little dog called Beatie to Roumania, and Beatie has asked the Prince, 'My master, how are you going to spend the evening of your first day in Sinaïa?' And this question the Prince has repeated to me. I suppose you all guess what I have answered." The witty and delicate way in which he had arranged

matters at once made the Prince dear to all the juvenile party assembled round him.

The famous tableaux vivants proved an immense success, the more so because his Royal Highness, who almost from the beginning had guessed the words of the charade, graciously pretended to be at his wits' end and completely puzzled. At last the closing scene brought Falstaff and the Prince of Wales (afterwards Henry V.) under his eyes, and the following lines were recited :

"Toi qui comme ton peuple en buvant dans son verre,
O Prince allègre et sage, O vainqueur d'Agincourt,
Regarde un autre Prince, espoir de l'Angleterre,
Ainsi que toi digne de son amour."

The Prince was deeply moved and thanked me heartily.

"I will never forget you," said he; "you have loved my dog, and you know the proverb, 'Love me, love my dog.' And the lines in which you so strongly bring out a resemblance between myself and one of England's most glorious Kings appeal so strongly to my soul that I should like to keep them as one of the best omens I have ever known. Please write them down for me. I must have them written in your own hand, and I will show them to my mother and to the Princess; they will both be as grateful to you for them as I am. You are well aware, if you have heard anything of myself and my character, that these words in my mouth are not idle

words." In fact, the very next day, during a long walk we took in the mountains, the Prince more than once came and walked by my side, asking me many questions about my country and my own pursuits, and telling me a good deal about himself and his own experiences as a traveller and as a Royal heir.

"Yes," he said, "I have been a most fortunate man—heir to a great throne and yet able to enjoy liberty. I have an admirable mother, an exquisite wife and charming children, a whole nation—nay, many nations in one—to love and please. I sometimes wonder how I manage not to become selfish and hard-hearted. Yet I pity misery and want, and when I have seen an anxious and worried face I cannot sleep before I have inquired into the cause of the poor creature's distress. I catch very vivid impressions when I travel, and I daily write to the Princess such descriptions of landscapes and people as I can well cram into a letter of reasonable length. She keeps these, and could one day make a book out of my travelling notes. I wish you could see the Princess. She possesses a soul as perfect as her face, which you must know is very sweet and beautiful."

How strenuous would prove the efforts of the new King in the interests of his people, how high his ideal of a monarch would rise, I was able to discover in the course of many conversations with his Majesty. "No one can tell," he said, "the vast difference which the change of position must create between an Heir-

Apparent and the Sovereign he afterwards becomes. I feel persuaded that even my face will change when I become a king. I fervently desire that the moment will be long in coming. I know I am in many ways rendering real service to my country as Heir-Apparent. I thus become acquainted not only with the people of England, but with all the interesting people abroad. I have learnt the organisation of every State, and many a foreign politician has developed his plans and methods and views in my presence. There is nothing like travelling to form the mind of a Prince, and I have always loved going from land to land. How your country has reminded me of India! The feeling that I shall never go to India again is very strong within me, and it saddens me. You cannot imagine, even in your dreams, the beauty of India and its lasting splendour. My mother, the first Empress of that marvellous Empire, has never visited it, though in her heart she has often desired to do so."

Then, while the Prince thus spoke, I put a sudden question which somehow seemed to startle him:—

"Sir, dare I ask your Royal Highness to tell me this: are Princes happier than other men?"

"What is your own opinion?" he replied. "Before I answer I should like to hear it."

"O sir, I am convinced they are a thousand times happier, though, of course, grief must come to them through the same causes as to others. But the cares of the Crown and the people are not, I am sure, a

load added to affliction. On the contrary, greatness helps to bear affliction. Greatness brings with it a strong desire for life, a keen enjoyment of its cares and toils."

"You are perfectly right," answered the Prince. "I do not think that Princes are more liable to feel grief than other mortals; nor, indeed, to feel it to the same extent. You see, if we are really awake to the calls of our position and its innumerable duties, we have no time to nourish our emotions; and then there is a great consolation in the certainty that so many share your sorrows or your joys. For instance, I have on the whole been a very happy man—a perfectly happy man; yet this does not mean that I have not often mourned and grieved."

These and similar reflections revealed King Edward's strong and cheerful mind; a mind which openly rejects hypocrisy, cultivates gaiety and self-possession, deems the best courage to be that kind of moral courage to which every hour and duty of the day is precious—the highest quality of a Sovereign.

The Prince left after three days' sojourn among the Karpathians. "I shall never forget you," said he again, before he mounted the steps of his railway carriage; "I shall never forgot your words and their good omen."

The remembrance of these scenes, to which memory clings so warmly, was strong upon me when I saw the King and Queen enter the choir of Westminster Abbey on the glorious morning of their

Coronation. As I stood there and gazed upon the admirable scene I prayed with fervour for the happiness of both Sovereigns, while the august and radiant pair received the blessings of Heaven on their bowed heads, and while the mingled voices of cannon, bells, and organs were bearing the good news from village to borough all over the land and beyond the seas.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA

Almost all the Queens of Europe possess an individuality of their own, are celebrated for some peculiar quality which springs up before the mind as soon as their names are mentioned. Unfortunate indeed is that sovereign lady who takes her place in history by virtue of her office alone, who has not succeeded in winning the real popularity so lavishly accorded a Queen or Queen Consort of essential beauty or individuality of character. Whatever may be her official virtues, her private merit, "for her no minstrel's bosom swells": she has no hold on the imagination of a people.

We are accustomed to connect with the late Empress of Austria her wild desire for liberty and space, her solitary walks through glades and mountain paths, her love of the sea and of castles lost amid parks as wild as those which protected the unhaunted slumber of the Sleeping Beauty. The name of Queen Elizabeth of Roumania can scarcely be mentioned without its recalling the tall white form of a Royal poet, awake from early dawn to gather material for her songs by long gazing on the towering heights of the

Karpathians, that encircle her beautiful dwelling. Maria Christina of Spain, again, is the sagacious, prudent Queen, the devoted mother, the resolute Sovereign of a land difficult to rule. It would, indeed, have been impossible to trace a portrait of her without some touches of austerity had we not found she presented such a contrast between the smiling gentleness of her eyes and speech and the iron fetters which Fate has bound around her, that all we had heard about her was instantly forgotten in the presence of the radiant vision upon which we gazed one summer day at Miramare. Again, the name of Queen Margherita of Italy suggests at once beauty and grace. She has become the very symbol of that sunny land where her first appearance was greeted as the vision of a fair-haired Madonna.

Some of the younger Royal consorts, such as the present Empress of Russia and Queen Helena of Italy, have not as yet acquired a hold of the public imagination: they do not enjoy the power of embodying a legend. This must, no doubt, be attributed to their youth, and perhaps also to the retiring nature of both. Yet one of them, the Empress of Russia, is Princess of the Rhine—a title worthy of any ballad and one which in itself lends attraction to its owner; while the second, the young Italian Queen, was born and bred in a poetic home hidden amongst the rocks of the wild Tchernagora. The Queen Consort of Greece is celebrated for her boundless generosity to the poor, and the young

Queen of Portugal for the tender care with which she tends little children. Her Majesty has, in fact, given and collected the means wherewith to build a large hospital, where she spends a few hours every day, and at times, being herself a clever and experienced physician, even takes an active part in surgical operations.

Queen Alexandra of Great Britain and Ireland is celebrated throughout the world for her rare beauty and for the love which she has been able to kindle in the hearts of her subjects. Though a number of them have the honour and pleasure of frequently approaching the presence of their lovely Queen, and even to some extent of sharing her existence, it was my lot—and one of which I feel especially proud—to become an immediate object of interest and sympathy to her from the very moment of our first encounter. This interest and sympathy, I am happy to say, her Majesty has continued to evince, rightly guessing how deep and fervent a worshipper she had found in the young Roumanian girl who was first presented to her on a rainy autumn morning in Queen Victoria's sitting-room at Balmoral. I remember how startled I then was to discover that the lovely youthful face, the luminous blue eyes—blue as the water of fjords and mountain lakes—the slim form, and the indescribable grace belonged to one who was the mother of grown-up children. Her very speech was full of that glee and curiosity so rarely the appanage of maturer years, since in the autumn of life

the soul loses its eagerness for new impressions and new experiences.

How charmed the Princess declared herself to be that day, when she heard we had come to Scotland for the first time, and with what gracious sympathy she began to describe the customs of the Highlands. From one window to the other she led us, pointing out all the details of the landscape as it lay before us, clad in its glory of purple heather, veiled by thin bluish mists, weird with the magic of unknown, mysterious influences.

"I can hardly imagine," said the fairy of the land, "that your Karpathians, gorgeous though they be, are ever clad with such a rich mantle of violet and dark red, or that your trees can rustle so gently as ours to the tune of the swift, clear river. But the Prince has told me of the dazzling sunshine as it rests on rocks and forests, and how strongly the colour of the Roumanian sky, the blinding whiteness spread above its azure depths, reminded him of India. The Prince always gives me such a vivid account of his travels that ever since his return I have been dreaming of your Queen's visit to England and to us, and, somehow, I was sure you would accompany her. I know all about you and about the tableaux vivants in Sinaïa. . . . I hope you will like your room here—we have paid special attention to its situation. As you are a poet you will delight in the fine view it commands. You will soon be able, even without going out, to become

acquainted with our woods and glens, and perhaps some day you will give us a description of them. Oh, if you would write a poem here! Doesn't inspiration come when you call her, like one of those tame godmothers we read of in fairy-tales, who at the touch of a magic wand appear upon the threshold and scatter jewels and flowers as they walk? Oh, please just send a message to me when you feel disposed to work, and I will sit by very quietly and watch you, as quiet as a mouse. I should love to sit by a poet when she is writing."

"Then I need not wait for inspiration," I replied, "and I want no magic wand. Your Royal Highness would represent the fairy, and I would gather the flowers and precious gems that fall from a Princess's eyes and tongue."

Although this sounded very like a banal Court compliment, the Princess's aspect, the bright gaze of her tender blue eyes, the easy harmony of her every gesture as she stood there, leaning a little out of the open window, made a true comment on my little speech. The voice of the river mingled with the soft rustling of the trees below, and to me it seemed as if the sweet feminine vision had risen from among them to complete the glamour of the hour. She was gazing far off to the distant hills, tracing their curves with hands so soft and supple that no thought could come of the day when they must hold the triple sceptre—heavier far than the wand of

beauty they waved that day over the heaving forests of the Highlands.

"You will wear your Roumanian costumes to-night at dinner?" continued the Princess. "I shall be so glad to see them. We once found a doll at a fancy fair dressed in Roumanian costume; but we could not tell whether the costume was really like the picturesque garb worn by your peasants."

A few hours later, as we were about to prepare for dinner, we were having a lively discussion with our maid as to which among the numerous costumes we had better wear—the maid, of course, proposing the most showy, the one that sparkled most and was decked the most heavily with gold and spangles. I had suggested that we should refer the question to our Queen, and had written a note asking her Majesty's advice on the subject, to which the Queen had answered: "I consider the white and silver one is the prettiest you possess." A soft knock at the door interrupted our survey of the different belts and aprons. I went myself to open it, expecting that the Queen had sent a second note, when I saw a slender form, clad in a plain, tailor-made blue serge dress. Seeing that I failed to recognise her in the rather dim light, the lady advanced into the middle of the room, saying quietly: "I am the Princess of Wales. You know me now, don't you? I have come to see all your costumes, and to find out whether you are comfortable in your rooms, and to watch how you arrange the different parts of this glistening attire," and she

pointed to a large divan on which in splendid array lay all the pride of Oriental embroideries and colouring.

One after the other the belts and veils and skirts were handed to the Princess, but when she perceived that this was no easy task—they were so numerous—she said :

"Please do not take the trouble of showing them to me, I will look over all these bright things by myself—indeed, I prefer doing so, but you must give me all the explanations I want." And many and eager were the questions she asked.

"This veil—do you wear it round your shoulders or on your head?"

"I do not wear it at all, madam; in fact, I could not do so. The veil is a symbol, the sign of the dignity to which a woman rises by marriage, and the sign of slavery, too. A married woman must cover her hair—no man may ever see her hair except her husband. They are very strict about this in our villages."

"Indeed!" answered the Princess; "but I do not approve of the restriction—they must look so fascinating with the veil. I suppose that it is a precaution against coquettishness and vanity. And this belt—why, how long it is!"

"The village girls wear it twisted twelve times round their waists."

"Which is the costume you intend to wear this evening?"

"This one, the white and silver, madam."

"It is very beautiful indeed, but rather heavy and gaudy for you," said the Princess, lifting the red skirts and snowy bodices one after another and holding them up, with exclamations of amusement. Then she uttered a cry of admiration. "Oh, how nice! Why do not you wear this? It is so simple, yet so tasteful. I am sure this coarse red skirt embroidered with thick yellow flowers, with a gleam of gold thread seen only here and there, must bear some charming meaning. There is something in this costume that appeals to my imagination."

"Your Royal Higness has guessed aright. This is the costume sometimes worn in our country by the wandering Tziganes. The rough linen, the coarse tissue of the skirt were once woven on purpose for the reckless girls of those strange tribes who may be seen at sunset lighting their fires before their ragged tents, which before daybreak will be carried away by their possessors, who know and desire neither rest nor settled home. Once upon a time the Tzigane beauties were accustomed to make themselves look dainty as they traversed the broad roads leading from one village to another; but now they do not care for any other dress than such as are, like these, made up of scraps of coloured finery. This garment, which interests your Royal Highness, is very old indeed; in fact, it was found buried in a green wooden box at the foot of a forest tree some fifty years ago, and no one can tell how long it had remained underground."

"How exciting!" exclaimed the Princess, as with breathless attention she followed my narrative. "Please go on. Is no one aware of the cause that forced the possessor of the Tzigane dress to bury it underground?"

"No, madam; on that point legends and popular imagination are allowed full sway. Some assert that the damsel who thus concealed her finery did so from despair—a love affair, of course. Others are convinced that she had made a vow to abandon all she held most precious in order to obtain a favour from the mysterious deities of the Tzigane race. But, however that may be, I prefer this costume to all the others. And if your Royal Highness will deign to look more closely, here in the belt is the little pocket where the young Tzigane kept a shell, and here the pocket for her little flute, and there a pocket again where this small dagger lay."

"But what did she keep a shell for?"

"Ah! That requires an explanation. Every Tzigane is a sibyl. She reads the future in the stars, in the summer foliage, in the sound of the summer streams; she listens, and voices heard by herself alone speak to her. But most of all do those mysterious voices sing to her in the depths of sea-shells. Thus no real Bohemian worthy of the name can go anywhere without a sea-shell. To tell the truth, madam, I secretly desired to wear this particular costume at dinner, but on reflection I feared that it was hardly suitable—it lacks decorum."

"But what if I forbid you to appear in any other?" said the Princess.

"I will obey you with the utmost pleasure, madam."

So delighted did the Princess seem with all that was novel to her in our conversation that she prolonged her visit, astonishing us by her deep knowledge of English and Scottish popular lore, and giving such advice about our trip to Ireland as proved how well she had learnt to know the Green Island which it was our intention to see.

It was growing late and the Princess still stood among the Oriental ornaments spread around her, while the mountain twilight was falling fast in the small sitting-room, where her figure now formed the one luminous point.

"You must come to Abergeldie, our Highland home, to-morrow," said she; "but first I will tell you all about Abergeldie and the quiet, refreshing life we lead there. Refreshing is the real word to express our autumn stay amongst these dear purple hills, where we seem to forget completely that we are Royalties, and only remember the fact when we discover the pleasure our presence bestows upon the people here."

But these records of Abergeldie I was destined not to hear, for at that moment a slight knock was heard at the door. I rushed to prevent the invasion of an intruder, and as I pulled the door open found myself confronted by a footman.

"Hush!" said I, without allowing him to speak,

"The Princess of Wales is here; I must attend to her Royal Highness. Any message you have to deliver must wait."

But the undaunted footman simply said: "The Queen desires you to go to her immediately."

"Oh, I see. Then kindly tell her Majesty that I cannot obey her for the moment, as the Princess of Wales is giving me the honour of her presence in my room."

The footman stood perplexed, then made a movement to retire, but the Princess now stepped to my side.

"You are making a terrible mistake," she said. "You believe he means *your* Queen, the Queen of Roumania, and I know she would be willing to dispense with your company in my favour. But this man means Queen Victoria. There is but one Queen —to us, at least, there is but one Queen here, the Queen of England, and she can brook neither delay nor excuse, so run quickly." Then, noticing that the footman had vanished, she added, "Oh, do not give him time to forestall you. Can you change your stately Court step into a good run? Here, give me your hand, I will show you the way," and with a swift, graceful motion the Princess moved beside me, holding my fingers between her own till we reached the doors of Queen Victoria's apartments.

When I found myself face to face with the aged Queen I could speak of nothing but the Princess of

Wales, and her Majesty stood nodding in pleased appreciation of my enthusiasm.

"And you have seen only one side of her various gifts: you should follow her life step by step. For many years the Princess has tried hard to spare me the strain and fatigue of great functions. She opens bazaars, attends concerts, visits hospitals in my place, and she always gives me such full and vivid accounts of people and places that I almost seem to have been present. I sometimes laughingly tell her that she is a dictionary in which is inscribed every variety of adjective connected with the words 'good' and 'true.' However terrible the load which I lay upon her slender shoulders, she not only never complains, but endeavours to prove that she has enjoyed what to another would be a nuisance or a tiresome duty. She even declares that a Drawing Room is a most entertaining sight, and that it does not make her feel dizzy or distressed when she glances from one face to another, without ever overlooking one of them. For my part I must own how interested I felt in my early youth in young faces and fresh *débutantes*; later on matrons and maturer ladies were the great point of attraction to me; and now I do so pity old ladies who have to wear the three feathers and go through the tiresome ceremony which, notwithstanding its irksome length and etiquette, I love to witness, as it is one of the characteristic English traditions, and must always remain dear to the hearts of British Sovereigns. . . . Princess Alexandra holds a Drawing

Room beautifully, and I am gratified to feel secure that, when I am no more, a Queen of England worthy of England's throne will grace it."

That very evening, in honour of our Queen, a Highland reel was danced in front of Balmoral Castle. The spectacle was new to us and somewhat bewildering. The glare of the torches, whose flames were shaken by the strong north wind, the loud, guttural sounds that escaped from that group of wild men, clad in the picturesque costume so often described by Walter Scott, sent a thrill through our imagination as we stood there on the stone threshold with the illumined hall behind us. Tartans flew high, and from head to foot the wild dancers appeared to be seized with a frenzy of cadence and clamour. Our Queen had insisted on getting as near the dance as possible, and presently, to complete the weird poetry of the scene, the gentle wail of distant bagpipes floated from the neighbouring hills, as if a chorus of mysterious and invisible beings were sending forth the welcome of the dim Highland glades to the strangers entranced by their pathetic charm.

A lady, enveloped in a plain grey woollen mantle, was standing by the side of our Queen. In the darkness, when the red streaks of the waving torches traced long furrows of flames, I could scarcely discern her form, and her face was hidden by a grey cap which descended low on her forehead. The cold was bitter, but we scarcely felt how sharply the night breeze blew, penetrating the thin tissue of our evening

dresses. We should indeed have felt our light summer cloaks unable to protect us from the biting atmosphere had we bestowed a thought upon ourselves, instead of remaining entranced, with eyes and ears intent on losing not a movement or a sound. Presently that silent lady in grey, whose form seemed to mingle with the rising mist, glided softly away, and I had forgotten her when the slender figure again appeared by the side of our Queen, and, raising her arm to the shoulders of the Royal guest, wrapped round her a fleecy white shawl, which I guessed to be welcome, and which I heartily envied. But I had barely time to do so before the graceful apparition had performed for me the same silent kindness. I lifted up my eyes and recognised the Princess of Wales. She had no leisure to listen to my grateful thanks, as her arms were laden with shawls, which one by one she deposited in the hands of the ladies present. Then quietly the gentle benefactress resumed her place, which she left only now and again in order to explain to us the different meanings of the words and dances. . . . The tartan flew, the bagpipes moaned and twittered, the torches spread their flames abroad in the dark night air, and the humid scent of the heather mingled with the smell of the river and the trees. That moment will remain alive in my memory for ever.

When we returned to the hall, where the Royalties had preceded us, the Princess of Wales was seated on a bench against the white stone wall. Her woollen

cap lay on her knees, and she had clasped her hands around it in a reverie which no one dared disturb. Then she rose and said: "Did you not love to hear those distant bagpipes?—did it not seem to you as if the spirit of the mountains breathed upon us from afar? That was my idea. Oh, try not to forget our Highland songs and dances!" And fervently in my heart I declared that I could never forget them, and that one of the impressions of that wild scene which I should most vividly remember would be the form of the shadowy lady in grey who stood so long by the side of our Queen.

I believe that amongst the many qualities ascribed to Queen Alexandra the one which she possesses in the most conspicuous degree is the quality which we are accustomed to admire in the heroines of history, whose valour, purity, intelligence, or grace have attracted the worship of multitudes—a knowledge which no learning can bestow—the secret, the magical power of being in sympathy with the souls with whom destiny connects them.

My destiny it was to meet the Princess again and again, in widely differing circumstances. In Rome one day in the gay bustle of a Sunday crowd, when the scent of crushed flowers and the odour of surrounding gardens rose in the sunlight and blue air, I met a figure so sweetly wrapped in sadness, so immersed in grief, that the cry of "Mater dolorosa" rose to my lips. No stronger image of maternal desolation, none more thrilling, could have struck

upon my sight than did the set expression of pain which paled the lovely vision of the northern fairy whom I had once seen so smiling, so light-hearted. Not with the hour of gaiety under the bright splendour of the Roman sky was Princess Alexandra in harmony that day, but with the hour which is filled with the dying perfume of crushed flowers—the hour which had bruised her soul and robbed her of her eldest born.

Later, again, we met at Marlborough House. The smiling Princess, the sorrow-stricken mother, had become a Queen, and a new majesty adorned her.

"Do you remember Balmoral?" she said. "Do you remember Rome? And now I am in black again—and black would be for ever in keeping with my thoughts if the people of this land were not so close to my heart. Then I have the comfort of my faith; I have my husband and my children. But, oh, at first I thought that I should never overcome my grief! Then I lost my own mother. We were not only mother and daughter, but such close friends. Then Queen Victoria——" And in low, subdued tones she told me of the days of gloom, of the day that preceded Queen Victoria's death, and the last hours of that glorious life.

"And I have to leave this dear old place, though I cling to it as I clung to my title of Princess of Wales, which I bore through so many happy days. As Princess of Wales I was a young wife and a young mother and a young figure to the people, and I shall

remain to them and to myself the Princess of Wales long after being a crowned Queen. There is so much to achieve and to cherish," she continued, "in the paths of duty and love. And who can deny the blessings of prayer? . . . Now tell me all about your work—I love poetry. Speak, and I will listen."

And the moments glided by while I spoke and the Queen listened; then again light came into the beautiful, unchanged face as she unravelled the skeins of memory, till through the melancholy of her tones faith and hope shone like stars amid dark foliage.

I had completely forgotten how long I had been there when an equerry or usher stepped forward, and in a respectful whisper reminded her Majesty of the hour. "Ah! yes," and the Queen rose to her feet, "I have quite forgotten the time. It is," and she turned to me, "a deputation from the town of Chester, which gave me a casket containing an address of loyalty on the day of our marriage—and now they come to congratulate us on our accession. But where are your books which I asked you to bring?"

I pointed to a low stool, and with a swift and graceful movement the Queen knelt before the humble volumes.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! I shall love them; you may be sure I shall."

And thus I left her. She rose to say good-bye

again, the trembling green shadows poured upon her form by the great trees encircling her head like an aureola of emerald, a wreath of hope

And, though since then I have seen England's Alexandra again—seen her in the glory and emotion of that Coronation hour at Westminster Abbey whose surpassing greatness held enshrined all the hours of her illustrious existence—that image of the new Queen in her old Marlborough home remains with me one of unrivalled beauty and sweetness, an image harmonious, fair, and dazzling, like the name and title of the exalted lady whose rank is eclipsed by virtues as countless as the gems of her crown.

THE EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA

It has been the destiny of few human beings to drain to the dregs so many varied cups of misfortune as the present Emperor of Austria. Few men have known as he has all the troubles that fate may pour on the head of a chosen victim. Whenever thought of the venerable sovereign arises within us, wherever his name is mentioned, it is not the image of his greatness, not the light of his benevolent smile nor the clear depths of his gentle blue eyes that appears before the interior gaze of our imagination. Instead of seeing him enthroned in a palace, surrounded by a throng of adoring nations gathered to greet their beloved lord and master, we find him encircled by a crowd of shadows, a funereal throng, each figure bearing a black urn filled with ashes and tears. Dark mourning garlands of dead flowers hang heavy on their brows as they advance with slow and faltering steps, and like Dante on the threshold of Hell questioning the mighty Poet whose white garb was the only ray in the thick darkness, we murmur to ourselves:

"Whence come these women so sad and so

distressed? Whence the wounds and the blood we behold? Why does that man whose looks betoken goodness bear a gap in his side? And the Royal Lady who walks not far from him, why has she stains of blood on her bosom and about her dress, though her demeanour is free and proud and her beauty more wonderful than the first dawn of day upon the sea? Who is the young man in the glow of youth whose features are gory and red as the sun at its setting, and why do we see knives in the air around him with all their points at his heart? Who are they? And who is that form standing out from the others in the mournful pageant, whose every gesture betokens a madness as sacred and mysterious as that of Hamlet?"

When our gaze has rested fully on the bewildering scene, like Dante again we question the Past.

"What was their story? It must have been singularly tragic and thrilling? Lay your hand on that lady's shoulder; touch her long hair that she may turn her head and show us those eyes in which one may read all the horror of despair, all the beauty of heaven and earth. Stay for an instant that other one, that illustrious sister of Hamlet, while she speaks to us of the distant land where her beloved spouse perished at the hands of those who should have sheltered and protected him. And if, O luminous guide, thou canst give tongue and speech to the most mute of all the taciturn throng, let that

young man reveal the terror of the hour when he stood face to face with death!"

They belong to us, each one of these phantoms. They belong to the poets, and we alone have the right to read their hearts. They are ours, and the greatest creations of our dreams would fall to dust did they appear in our songs. From the days of her early youth we have recognised as our own the radiant Empress who came from the dim Bavarian forests bearing in her disdainful heart a thirst for pain and for happiness. She turned her eyes from all joys but those which nature affords, the rising of dawn upon the silence-wrapped sea, the noble calm of high peaks when the last rays of the sun strike them with purple daggers. And he, the ardent son of the wild Empress, he belonged to us, he belonged to the poet who loves brilliant accesses of force and desire, passionate thrillings of souls ever ready to court peril. From his mother he inherited a craving for liberty which conventional restraints turned to rebellion and desolation. From her came his strong spirit ever ready to conquer or perish. Even before his birth it seems as if he were dedicated to some frightful destiny whose vengeful power would drive him to his fate. She herself once compared him to the son of Thetis and she wept over him in the same way as the Queen of the Sea wept over her hero son. In remembrance of her grief she had a statue of Achilles erected on the banks of the Greek Sea, where among myrtle boughs and roses Thetis

lives again in the waves and mourns for ever the lost warrior and king.

Ah, what a throng of shadows, what a murmur of sobs and distraught words follows the gentle Emperor! Yet his step is firm and his smile as unvarying as if he heard and saw them not, while the benevolent light in his blue eyes gains every heart. Those who approach him say with truth that he is a very miracle of fortitude.

When, a few centuries ago, the German Emperor Maximilian fled like a hunted animal from province to province of his vast realm, ever pursuing a wild chase with hounds and horn, he was in reality endeavouring to escape from his own terror-haunted soul. He suffered from what we should now call a nervous complaint only to be relieved by violent exercise. When Juana la Loca—mad Queen Joan—wandered all over Spain in her huge black coach of ebony and velvet drawn by stalwart black horses, she said she was fleeing from the grasp of death that she feared would snatch her handsome young husband from her arms. He had long been dead but her fond madness found relief in the hallucination. Her son, Charles V., feeling across his life the dark shadow of his mother's madness, retired to a convent. He thought to escape the dread inheritance by seeking that comfort and repose that prayer and solitude alone afford.

Thus many sovereigns of this fated race have fled before visions and fears that made the blood curdle

in their veins. Franz-Josef, Emperor of Austria, has never entertained the idea of flight. He has not felt the strange desire to carry with him into the depths of a desert or into the silence of a tomb the shadows whose wailing voices he must have ever in his ears. He bravely and resolutely bids them follow and even help him as he struggles along in the path of duty. They sit at his table and dwell under his roof, never leaving him for a moment, yet cheerfulness and conviviality reign at his meals and labour and unwavering attention to the cares of State fill his hours. Like an untamed captive, chained yet unconquered, the Emperor takes a pride in bearing his misery lightly. He allows no one to guess how much he suffers when, amid the dazzling splendour of Royal functions, he sees the empty places once graced by the presence of his beloved ones. What effort must be required, what terrible strength of will, to bring a smile to those lips which have been so often pressed to the cold cheek of the dead, and to those eyes in which the image of death has so many times been mirrored! Once he was indeed a happy man. Though the mysterious Empress sometimes deserted his home—for even before her great misfortune she showed a taste for roaming—she would return to Vienna from time to time and even make her appearance at State balls once or twice in the year. Upon such occasions the proud husband never left her side and seemed happy in watching the effect created on all beholders

by her beauty. The Empress used to wear her long hair loose on her shoulders and the young Heir Apparent, a boy in his teens, notwithstanding the strictness of Austrian court etiquette and the solemnity of the occasion, would tease his mother by stepping on the rich waves of flowing gold, at which the Emperor scolded a little and laughed much, while the proud Imperial lady gazed dreamily on the dancers or went from one noble guest to another, letting the words fall drowsily from her lips. For her own particular use she invented a manner of speaking afterwards imitated by the Austrian Archdukes and Princesses, which reduced the tones of the voice to a sort of muffled cooing sound. The Empress affected this peculiarity because, detesting the pomp and ceremonial of pageants and State functions, she declared that it was not worth while to take the trouble to speak when she was only permitted to say meaningless nothings. In private she became less reserved, but the habit of speaking in a low tone is a family tradition with the Bavarian Princesses. The sister of the deceased Empress, Queen Sophia of Naples, whom I saw lately in Paris, never raises her voice above a whisper, which peculiarity renders her resemblance to the Empress still more striking.

Three or four years before I met the Emperor of Austria at Vienna, I had the opportunity of spending an hour in the company of his only son, Archduke Rudolf, a circumstance which I remember the more

vividly because it clings to me with the strong hold which events of our childhood take upon us. I was then a little girl, occupied by turns with books and butterflies. Sometimes on a Sunday to reward us for steadfast obedience during the week our Queen would invite us—my sister, a few companions of our own age and myself—to the royal palace at Bucharest, where we were allowed to chat and play under her Majesty's indulgent eyes. But on the particular afternoon of which I am speaking I was alone. I had been taken to the palace by my governess for the special purpose of reciting some childish verses I had composed. Although the heir to the Austrian throne was then on a visit to our court, yet the Queen found some minutes to spare for me. She had been warmly interested by hearing that on moonlight evenings I used to stroll about the grounds of our country house and climbing on a swing sing long ballads to the moon, while the swift movement bore me high into the air or brought me down again to the level of the silver bespangled sward. In vain my parents remonstrated with me concerning this dangerous exercise. I cried and begged to be allowed one hour for solitary dreaming after the twilight had set in, and to this day when the sense of soft cadence flutters through my soul, I feel around me again the balmy radiance of the evening hour and hear the creaking moan of the swing as it nestled for one swift second in the topmost branches of the tree or came down to rest in the

grass where the moon's rays lay like the wings of a dove. The Queen was most curious and impatient to judge of my early inspirations, and I had scarcely entered her gorgeous apartments than she took my hand in hers, saying:

"Now be a brave girl. You are not afraid of me, are you? I want to hear your last poem, the one about the nightingale who quarrels with the moon because she is mute and the nightingale sings with all his might to force the moon to sing also."

"Yes, madame, they quarrel all through the night, but at morning the sun settles matters by chasing away the nightingale and making the moon so pale that she hides herself in the sky."

"What a shame both for the nightingale and the moon!" said the Queen. "Don't you pity them? But I cannot stop long, so please begin." And swinging myself to and fro in the big chair I delivered the innocent speech, the colloquy that on my childish lips took such deep import. The Queen seemed delighted. It was a clear day at the beginning of spring. The palm trees in the neighbouring conservatory seemed to gasp for a breath of the fresh air that brought perfume and coolness from the garden. "Stay here a moment," she said. "I am going to find something that will give you pleasure. Stay here while I go and fetch it for you from my dressing-room." I was well acquainted with her Majesty's apartments and felt pleased whenever the opportunity was afforded me of wandering

amongst the costly furniture and precious objects they contained.

"Please don't touch my desk nor approach my writing table, but you may run about till I return, and then—then I will show you my parrots. One of them is such a queer, weird bird. He mopes and frets from morning till night. He is a beautiful creature, so gaudy and yet so prim, with plumage like stained glass. He seems to hate every one. I call him the unlucky parrot. You shall see him and all my other birds."

The Queen was gone and with thoughts intent upon the cheering promise I crossed the long music gallery that looked dark and severe because the folding doors opened into the green conservatory where the huge palms longed in vain for liberty to sigh and wave like the happy trees in the garden. Suddenly the sound of breathing caught my ear. It was regular and loud as if the bosom from which it issued were oppressed or very full of air. I entered the conservatory and my light step did not disturb the unknown, who was reclining in front of me in one of the easy chairs under the quiet palms. His arms hung lazily and his hands seemed almost to touch the stone pavement. His image rises before me as I saw him then, his face set in an expression of firm resolve and nervous restraint. His was one of those faces to which even a smile brings no relief. His head was upturned so that I could only perceive the close reddish beard round his cheeks and chin.

How thrilling and terrible appears to us, looking back into the past, the moment when unwittingly we broke upon the solitary reverie of a being whose story has since been steeped in blood, to reflect that perhaps we disturbed their silent converse with self just at the time, the exact second when some glimpse of the future might have risen before them, when some voice from the depths of the abyss cried "Beware!"

These reflections which lead me now to consider that day with awe and solemnity did not trouble the happy young girl who listened under the palm trees that clear afternoon in an atmosphere of peaceful luxury and magnificence. I was then myself on the threshold of life and could not understand all the pathos which in after years was attached to the memory of the Archduke. To-day the graceful presence perceived that day in the royal palace at Bucharest is illumined in my mind by the flickering light of the candle placed on the fatal supper table at Mejerling, in that small hunting box—since become a cloister where pious nuns pray day and night.

When I remember the slender nervous fingers that played with the arm of the garden chair, I cannot repress a shudder at the thought that, destined to hold a sceptre, they should have been so early lost in the folds of a shroud.

At first I was taken aback and wondered what would be the consequences of my intrusion, and who

the young man was who made himself so much at home with the chairs of the Queen's conservatory. At last I made up my mind what to do and coughed lightly. The sound made him start a little, and then I said abruptly, "I want to see the parrots, that's why I came in." The stranger looked so supercilious and so thoroughly at his ease that I wanted to make him understand that my entrance had nothing to do with him. To my astonishment he paid me such scanty attention that I mentally dubbed him a monster, and took a dislike to him on the spot, for I was accustomed to have great attention paid to my dishevelled hair, rosy cheeks, and boisterous speech.

"Oh, the parrots. They are not far from here, judging by their screams." These words, uttered in a soft yet distinct voice, fell lazily from the full lips. The man who spoke allowed each syllable to escape languidly as if he disdained his own thoughts and words. Then, closing his eyes, he gave a half yawn and sank back to repose and reverie. My indignation knew no bounds. Who was this fellow? How dared he lounge in a place where the Queen might at any moment make her appearance? How dared he disparage her parrots? But soon I should be revenged, the Queen would come directly, and then my fine gentleman would have to rise and offer apologies, while I should be present at the scene. He should see how the Queen treated me and the parrots, he should learn to respect me.

Meanwhile, a terrible obstacle lay before me. He had pointed to the place whence the screams of the birds proceeded, but he kept his legs stretched across the floor like two rods of iron. They looked hard and unyielding, and in order to cross the small space between himself and the table I should either have to ask him to draw his legs back or else to jump over them. I was on the point of accomplishing this ungraceful act when the Queen came to my rescue. Now, I thought, he will leap to his feet, implore forgiveness, humble himself by proffering excuses——

Alas! certainly he made a movement which evinced some vague intention of leaving his chair, but he showed such poor alacrity that the Queen had time to interpose, saying, with outstretched arms: "Please, please, dear Rudolf, do not disturb yourself. I am so pleased to see you enjoying half an hour's rest. You love my dear palm trees, don't you? We will have tea presently. First, I must take this little girl to see the parrots. Do you know that she is a poet, this child?" This time the languid eyes quivered with an expression almost of disgust, and the Archduke turned his head away. But the Queen continued, "She is such a chatterbox, a fit rival for the birds there, and *so* gay."

"That's right," he said, in the curious voice that seemed to soothe and prick by turns. "That's right. I love gay women. Oh dear, how tedious some women can be! You cannot imagine. Women bore me to death when they are not laughing or

singing. As a matter of fact, are they good for anything else?"

"For a great many other things," answered the Queen. "But let us away, dear child, because I must soon return for tea."

At the further end of the conservatory a small fountain, hidden among a forest of trees, gave forth a low gurgling sound. The gorgeous birds in their golden cages flapped their wings and shrieked with joy on perceiving the Queen. They were indeed beautiful, these prisoners, and their splendours made my young eyes sparkle with delight. One of them bore on his back shades of tender grey intermingled with rosy streaks, another was all yellow with a red collar round his neck, a third seemed as if bespangled with gold with a bosom like the rainbow. The perfume of tropical seas and islands, the gladness that descends at morn on the forests and the wilds in regions unexplored save by our fancy, the entrancing colours of exotic skies hovered about the place, and the birds filled the air with screams and clamour.

"Here is the unlucky bird," said the Queen. "He is a ridiculous yet pathetic figure. Colonel Voinesco brought him from Brazil. He was born in freedom, and I suppose he detests us for keeping him here." The parrot before which the Queen had stopped was smaller than the others, but far prettier. His plumage was blue and green—such deep green and intense blue that it glittered like lightning in dewy grass. On his small, well-poised head he had

a huge tiara of blue feathers which moved to and fro and swung like the swift gleam of a knife blade. His jet-black beady eyes darted a hostile look at us, as with ruffled wings he silently retreated to the bottom of his cage.

"Do look at him," said the Queen. "What would he not give to be able to bite us if he could, if only some one were to open his cage and touch him, but his beak is so sharp he might give a bad wound, and no one cares to make the experiment. No one dares——"

"Indeed! Does no one dare? How foolish!" It was the mellow yet caustic voice of the Archduke that pronounced these words with an ironical inflection lurking under the purring tones. We turned and saw him advancing briskly towards us. His movements showed extraordinary harmony and grace, and his bounding step seemed hardly to touch the ground. There was something airy, almost weird, about his figure and bearing, and I have never been able to forget the pleasure I experienced at the sight of the admirable contour of his form.

Cautiously the Archduke crept to the other side of the cage, and the Queen gave a scream almost of terror when she saw him open the cage door with one swift movement and plunge his fingers in the parrot's glittering feathers. The slow caress lingered voluptuously in the warmth and colour of the close plumage, and the bird seemed as if caught in the power of a spell, remaining motionless while the

slender hand travelled to and fro over his glorious wings and shoulders. All at once the bird turned his gorgeous little head to bite, but almost as suddenly he unfolded his wings and sounds of distress issued from his struggling bosom. The Archduke laughed—a low, rippling laugh. "Ah," said he, "I'll not kill you this time, you cantankerous little beauty. But this will teach you to be less treacherous. Parrots are like all other creatures, one has to be always on one's guard with them." And then we saw that while he was playing with the bird he had kept his thumb and first finger round the parrot's neck, so that at a moment's notice he could have mastered and even strangled it.

The Queen often spoke of the Archduke's penetrating intellect and strong qualities of sagacity and prudence; moreover, she used to tell us how well versed he was in every language spoken in the vast empire which was one day to be his. Later, when the heartrending tragedy of his untimely death lent a new interest to his personality, many tales were told about the ill-fated young Prince. But to me he has remained pictured as I saw him that day under the lofty palms, lost in languid and melancholy thought, while maybe even then the grim future rose before him in the blue atmosphere of that spring afternoon.

The Emperor of Austria was still in mourning for his unfortunate son and heir when I gazed for the first time upon his dear mild features. From the

very windows of the Hotel Muntsch, where the Emperor came to call upon our Sovereigns immediately they arrived in Vienna, the chapel, or rather the wall of the chapel where the Archduke was buried, could be seen. While our King introduced the ladies and gentlemen present one after another the Emperor had to keep his eyes from straying towards the familiar spot, the Church of the Capucins, beneath which lay the vault full of coffins.

On reaching the spot where I was standing the Emperor politely exchanged with me the unvarying formula on such occasions. "Is it your first visit to Austria? Do you like Vienna? I hope so. . . ." But my thoughts were running wild, traversing the narrow street, and I wondered if the Emperor's mind followed the same track. His slim figure, as supple and well-knit in its pure white uniform as that of any young officer in his army, reminded me of the flexible grace I had once observed in the figure and walk of the dead Prince. Again, there was a striking likeness between the father's withered hand, with its long delicate fingers, and the youthful hand which I had seen resting on the parrot's bright plumage dallying with the bird's life. But the father's eyes were light blue, so clear and soft that no trace could be found in them of those greenish orbs where light and shadow had mingled like the dark forms of ships passing in drowsy haze at night.

The Emperor spoke again. "Have you visited any of our monuments at Vienna yet?" and I could

not help expressing my thoughts in words: "Yes, I have seen the Imperial vault. But I went to see the tomb of the poor young King of Rome, the Duke of Reichstadt, I mean. His was such an unhappy fate, though scarcely more unfortunate than that of his father."

"Kings and Emperors must be unhappy because they are human. I do not mean that they are more unhappy than other people, but their position forces them to endure many things which add to their common sorrows. When you go to Schönbrunn be sure to visit the Duke of Reichstadt's apartments. . . ." The voice had not faltered, nor the gentle eyes lost their calm serenity, as I uttered the imprudent speech I would have given worlds to recall, but the slender figure trembled and the thin hands were clenched.

It is an extraordinary coincidence that I should have been brought into touch first with the Archduke, afterwards with the Emperor, and later still with the Empress, in circumstances rendered similar by the fact that they came upon me unawares and in such manner that I failed to recognise them. How this happened with the Emperor and later on with his Consort I will now relate. . . . On our return from a long journey in Germany, the Queen, my sister and myself again stopped for a few days in Vienna, where "Carmen Sylva" had given appointments to many of her relations and friends among the Archduchesses. Moreover, a drama written by the

royal authoress was on this occasion to be handed to the actors of the Imperial Burg Theatre. The Queen was travelling in the strictest *incognito*, but scarcely had we reached the hotel and finished lunch than her Majesty said: "I must make haste and dress. We are going to Schönbrunn. This time I have made it a point of honour to forestall the Emperor. He is always so kind and polite that he calls upon me directly he knows of my presence in Vienna. I want to be beforehand with him for once. Order a carriage now and I will be down in ten minutes."

I was pacing the long hall of the hotel, waiting for the Queen and watching the ebb and flow of travellers whose faces I could not well distinguish because of my short sight and the half twilight, when all at once a gentleman walked up to me and, lifting his hat, politely said, pointing to a tray on the table at my side where he had laid a card: "This card is for the Queen of Roumania; will you see that it is taken up to her Majesty directly? I hope you have had a good journey."

"It is of no use to send the card up now. The Queen would not receive any one. She is in a great hurry. She has made a wager with herself that she will call upon the Emperor before he has time to come to the hotel. Of course she will win, because the Emperor could not come at such short notice unless he has the fastest horses in the world and any amount of energy."

"Maybe he has both," answered the gentleman, whose lithe figure, dressed in a plain black coat, seemed to have the vigour and grace of youth, but whose visage I could not see as his back was turned to the light. He went on: "But what would you say if the Emperor were even more fleet-footed than his horses and had come on foot from the Burg to see the Queen?"

"Impossible at his age and in such a crowd. Why, every one would recognise him and gather round him. He is so *much* beloved by his people—and you cannot imagine how much our Sovereigns like him."

"So you think that every one would recognise the Emperor?"

"Of course—even I would anywhere, at any moment. His face is not a peculiar one, but he has a remarkable expression of kindness, and it could never happen that I should have the pleasure of conversing with him without knowing who he was, as I once did in the case of his nephew and son."

"Don't be so sure when you say 'never.' The Emperor is very keen on giving pleasure. There is nothing he enjoys more. But I must take leave of you. May I venture to ask you to carry that card yourself to the Queen? I am very anxious that her Majesty should have it at once. Good-bye." The charming gentleman stretched out his hand to me and vanished amid the crowd of travellers. I saw his tall, supple form cross the threshold and mingle with the passers-by.

Turning to give effect to his wish I took up the card and read the simple inscription in French: "L'Empéreur d'Autriche, Roi de Hongrie." The Queen's defeat, my own adventure, the Emperor's pleasant manner and voice all tended to give me wings as I flew upstairs. "Too late, too late!" I cried on perceiving her Majesty who stood with bonnet and gloves on. "The Emperor has been here. He gave me his card himself. I actually talked to him and he knows that your Majesty wanted to prove yourself even more courteous than he."

"Still, we must go to Schönbrunn all the same," said the Queen.

Next day we went down into the Imperial vault, where coffins of every shape and size stand thick; some of them are of simple appearance, bearing on their massive silver lids merely the name of the dead Prince or Princess inscribed on a slab of reddish copper. But the Empress Maria Theresa, the Emperors Joseph II., Ferdinand, and many other potentates who have ruled the nation, repose in big silver tombs ornamented with crosses, angels and garlands. Around them sleep the children they nurtured and loved. Against the wall we saw the plain glittering coffin in which the remains of the Archduke Rudolf are enclosed. It differs from the others in the fact that it is always covered with wreaths of flowers. The difference between one recently dead and those of an earlier period is also

marked by the ever burning lamp which sheds a hesitating golden light on the dull grey metal. Nowhere could the soul be more deeply impressed with the power and solemnity of death than beside that heavy silver case. Nowhere does the human tongue whisper in tones more awed and low: "If he could but speak, he who now sleeps for ever in his tomb of triple metal! If he could speak, what might he not relate, what mysteries might he not unveil?" A few paces away, on a coffin now blackened by the dusty fingers of time, a thrilling inscription rivets the eye: "Here lies the Duke of Reichstadt, Archduke of Austria, son of Napoleon I. and of his spouse Marie Louise, Archduchess of Austria and Duchess of Parma." Stronger than the tie of blood the relationship of a dire fate links together across the abyss of years the mysterious Rudolf and this lonely child, the sole love of the Giant Warrior, the mighty conqueror who fell from such giddy heights.

Last month I spent half an hour in the Capuciner Gruft, as the Imperial vault is called in Vienna. By the side of the Archduke now rests his mother, and the same soft lamp glimmers above both coffins. Garlands and ribbons lie at her feet. My heart bled within me at the sight and I said aloud: "This is no place for thee, for such a lover of all that was bright and fair upon earth. Alas for thee, O wandering Empress, to be laid here in darkness! But for thy soul which now perhaps floats through

gardens more beautiful even than those which thy fancy traced upon the edge of the Grecian sea, I could weep to behold thy remains imprisoned in this gloomy spot where the dust of the high and mighty keeps aloof, disdaining to be contaminated by the touch of Mother Earth, mouldering and crumbling to ashes without paying to Nature the tribute of fertilisation which is her due. Alas for thee!"

As I spoke my voice, though subdued, created a strange lugubrious echo in the dank atmosphere that hangs over the dead, and the day when I had met the Empress rose before my mind, a day in early March at Wiesbaden. I had started from my hotel to pay my respects to H.R.H. Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland. Her daughters, the Princesses Louise and Victoria, had kindly invited me to tea, but when I got downstairs I found on looking at the clock that I had an hour to spare. To pass the time I strolled out into the street. By-and-by I got into a long avenue leading out of the town to a plain with a charming little forest where the fresh gusts of the breeze brought me the first whiff of green verdure. But spring had not yet arrived, and the trunks and branches, bereft of foliage, stood out like dark threads against the light grey sky. Though the Rhine was invisible yet the landscape bore that look of fluidity and freshness which marks the neighbourhood of a great river. So charmed was I with the light colouring of the sky and landscape,

with the timid efforts of the breeze in its endeavours to hasten the coming of spring, that I did not notice how far I had walked nor how near the time was approaching for my visit to the Princesses, and when I turned to retrace my steps I found to my despair that I had completely lost my way. There were more than twenty footpaths and it was impossible to tell which led back to Wiesbaden and which to the Rhine and the bridge. At this juncture a lady made her appearance on the other side of the road. She was very tall, and wore a plain grey dress that clung closely to her slim figure. A huge feather fan, black and glossy, hung down from her wrist. In her other hand she bore a white parasol to which her black sailor hat was suspended by an elastic so that the hat trembled and danced at each step she took. She stood still not far from me with her head uncovered, revealing hair so fine, so silken, that notwithstanding the thickness of the tresses piled on her head they seemed as light as vapour touched by the sun at sunset, as if composed of nothing more substantial than air and colour.

She made a gesture of brusque protestation as I opened my lips to speak.

"Pardon, madam," I said, "but I have lost my way. Could you tell me which of all these roads and footpaths leads back to Wiesbaden? I want to return to the town."

"And you are going towards the Rhine," she answered.

"Then it must be the attraction of the water, the voice of the gay Dryads, that calls me."

"The attraction of the water?" she repeated. "I am a slave of the Dryads, and the Nereids too. I should like to live and to die among them." Her voice, her presence, her every gesture was sad and restless. She lifted her huge black fan and held it across her face, the feathers almost kissed her eyes, and in those eyes I saw lights and shadows pass. . . . "Go that way," she said. "*I* shun cities, and I wish that I could turn my back for ever upon all the cities of the world." With these words she passed through the bare trunks of the trees towards the river

A few minutes' brisk walking brought me back to the town, and I hurried on to the hotel where I passed a delightful hour with the kind and clever Princesses. After tea as we were sitting in the broad window whence we could see the passers-by, Princess Victoria said: "Quick, quick, take your eyeglass. Look, there is the Empress of Austria. That tall lady in grey!" I saw the unknown lady I had met in the forest, who was now passing amongst the crowd, her black hat shading her whole visage.

The Empress never learnt my name though she afterwards showed a special interest in my work. She kept up a regular exchange of letters with our Queen—not, it is true, the easy correspondence which becomes an everyday intercourse between friends, but whenever the Empress found a flower, a stone, a

passage in a poem which thrilled her, she sent the cause of her emotion to the Queen, and in like manner the Queen apprised her of any discovery she made in the field of literature, art, or sentiment. Thus the Empress was the first to appreciate the collection of Roumanian songs, and immediately on receiving an early copy she wrote: "Send me as many of these ballads as you can. Do not take the trouble to copy them out for me, send me the originals with the mistakes and corrections, and keep the good copies for yourself and Hélène. I call her by her name because I like it. It is a Greek name which means beauty and strife."

Among the many shadows which haunt the aged Emperor's footsteps hers is the sweetest and the grandest, and *her* name, like the Greek name she loved, has already been inscribed on the pages of history as meaning Beauty, Grief, and a fierce desire for Space and Liberty.

THE GERMAN EMPEROR

If to speak of oneself, and to cause oneself to be spoken of, on every possible occasion suffices to make a man great, then the German Emperor is a great man. If to handle every instrument, to dabble with every art—possessing the conviction that one understands them better than those who have applied both time and mind to their technique—suffices to constitute him a genius, then William of Germany is a genius indeed. If to startle and shock public opinion, and even at times to dominate it, can suffice to proclaim a monarch more powerful than any other, then the German Emperor is the most powerful monarch of the day. If to be an admirable artist it suffices to display or put into force as many original and incoherent ideas as possible, the German Emperor is an admirable artist. Finally, if to be a hero it suffices to hold complete sway over the imagination of millions, the German Emperor may well boast of being the ideal heroic personage to whom all turn in wonder and admiration; and he must take pride in the conviction that he possesses worshippers and detractors as numerous and untiring as the waves of the sea.

Upon the horizon of contemporary events his strange, aggressive silhouette stands out erect and clear. In a century where each individual seems to have seen and known everything and everybody, he yet remains amongst the few personalities whose names create a sensation when one can say: "I have actually seen him, I have spoken with William the Second." The perpetual transformation of his various attitudes of mind as of his costumes has perhaps helped to make him more popular even than his other characteristics, which are always extraordinary, though they appear natural because they are his. Proteus alone in the realm of mythological lore, and Shakespeare in the domain of creative emotion, had hitherto accustomed us to the wonderful changes which may be wrought in human souls and bodies in one brief moment. But whereas Proteus, who became in turn a stream, a living flame, a tempest, and a wild beast, was meant to incarnate the subtle power of the natural elements; and whereas Shakespeare represented in the varying moods of his characters the symbols of our destiny, the Emperor's intentions are neither so subtle nor so deep on his appearance thrice a day in three diverse uniforms. He belongs to an age when rapidity of action is deemed a virtue, and his chief wish is to stand as the faithful image of his time. How many kings, queens, heroes, or heroines are there who, like Mary Queen of Scots, still hold sway over the imagination, whose memories from the darkest depths of bygone ages still arise to thrill us with the

grandeur and the sadness of their fate! How many yet rule the imagination of poets and philosophers, and can never die while our interest, our pity, or our worship keep them alive! William of Germany wishes, like these chosen few, to survive in the memory of his people.

In every way and in every sense of the word he is ambitious. And his larger ambitions are fair and pure, although at times some may border on petty vanity. But how often does he cast a glance into the future to challenge that mute crowd called posterity, how many times does he whisper to himself in the silence of his sleepless nights: "Shall I be among those whose memory is ever remembered and ever revered? Will my deeds be recorded in the same loud tones in which my speeches and commands are uttered?" Of course no one can tell what William the Second thinks in these matters, but what may be safely asserted is that thought or fear of death never enters his soul. He lives in the security that he cannot die.

I never fail to read his innumerable speeches, because of the utter candour for which they are remarkable. The author has perfect faith in himself and in his infallibility, and this he proclaims in every word. In order to enjoy them the more completely, I recall the days when I was present to hear the Emperor utter his pompous or his simple phrases. I see again his imperious glance, his firm mouth and clenched fists, I hear his voice as it falls

with the dry sound of an iron hammer upon each syllable. The strong assurance that he cannot in any case be interrupted must always endow an orator with a firm grasp of his own sentiments and those of his audience. In this mastery the Emperor revels, and I believe that when all his speeches are collected and published in one enormous volume, the literature of the world will be enriched by a masterpiece of self-reliance and didactic eloquence. His mystic and warlike rhapsodies are as complete, as violent, and as great in their way as the sermons of Bossuet, the dreams of Shakespeare, and the famous love-letters of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse. But, unlike Bossuet before the mortal remains of Louis XIV. saying: "My brethren, God alone is great," the Emperor ever says: "I alone, I am great, O my people."

Notwithstanding these strictures and any to be made hereafter, I sincerely hope that my readers will discern that I am an admirer of the German potentate and hero—for he is a hero, and this all but unique quality will suffice to place him far above every living sovereign of our day. He is a hero, and in his desire to remain a hero he knows neither rest nor fear. All who follow his career step by step must allow that in the warmth and accomplishment of this desire lies the secret of his force. For the achievements of a man must appear heroic and sublime when he not only does his best and his utmost to attain his ideal every hour of the day, but when we see him breathe as freely

and as eagerly the cold air of the high summits on which he is placed as if there were on his shoulders no weight of an imperial mantle. Every one must allow that a hero who draws continual heroism out of the smallest actions of everyday existence is a poet worthy of the name though unconscious of his calling. He may be said to be the wealthiest amongst the wealthy; he tastes a joy that others will never know, since that art which caused Leonardo da Vinci equally with Cæsar Borgia to pursue and attain the pitch of real emotions, to learn and teach the pleasures of eternal pursuit, the Emperor of Germany possesses in its entirety; and in this respect he may be said also to resemble the manly heroes of the Italian Renaissance.

Each of his intellectual gifts is inherited from his mother; he is likest his father when in a gracious mood and boyish in words and bearing. It is necessary to make occasional reference to mythology in describing him, because he forms a parallel to the ancient myth that represents Phaëton, whose father Apollo entrusted him for a whole day with the glorious duty of driving the chariot of the sun along its golden pathway. Like Phaëton's chariot, the one that William guides with hands and eyes unmoved is fiery and magnificent, but over the taut stretched reins his nervous fingers are closed with a sure grasp, and the firm gaze of the imperial sun-god is not abased before the brilliant rays which concentrate their fierce light upon him. In the history

of nations as of individuals mankind is divided into two classes: on one side are the sowers, on the other the reapers; there are those who toil and dig and those who gather and enjoy. The German Emperor is a reaper, an eager, hopeful reaper, who leaves not a sheaf unturned, not a grain in the furrow behind him. The double images above his head, images of the sower, the grandfather who always smiles, and of the stern Count who always frowns, have been unable to deter him from the pursuance of his self-set task.

What land does the German Emperor not know? under what sky has he not passed? what town has not received him with flags and honours? what historic city has not acclaimed him? He has roamed in the Holy Land, has heard the muezzin call from Egyptian towers, watched the violet twilight die in the northern skies, and for him the palm forests of Arabia have lulled the moon to sleep among their branches in the softness of an oriental night. He has stepped into the dusky coolness of learned and worm-eaten universities, and basked in the pagan beauty of Florence, Sicily and Naples. He has lingered among the divine marbles of the Parthenon, and the eternal divinity of their form and grace lives in his soul. Rome has watched him as he passed through her streets and suburbs away from the din of the city. In Europe one land alone he has forgotten, the land that is dear to me because it is mine. It is an extraordinary fact that in all his wanderings the German Emperor has never returned

the numerous visits paid him by the Roumanian King, never even sent a representative of royal blood, though he has at all times been aware that he would be a welcome guest to this country. . . .

The German Emperor has played all the parts in an historical repertoire: he has been in turn a pontiff without consecration, a warrior without battles or foes, a dramatist without drama; but he has always remained the same imperious, subtle personage in all his diverse incarnations. He possesses in a supreme degree the art of pleasing, and yet at the same time hurting people's feelings. Gaiety and wrath are not with him, as with Napoleon, instruments ready to hand, but his humour varies from one moment to the other, and so rapidly that in the same hour he may be kind or obstinately cruel. He may appear to some entirely hard-hearted or entirely kind. In truth he is neither; he is the Emperor—that is to say, a being impatient, haughty, eager to please and astonish, strong-minded, omniscient, omnipresent. To complete the circle but one thing is lacking—the charm of mystery, that enchantment which is spread like a spell, and which lived in the magic force of the Sphinx of the Pharaohs, in the shrine where Isis was adored, and even threw a halo of romance around such a monarch as Philip the Second of Spain. The German Emperor does not possess it. He is of all living monarchs the least mysterious and the least invisible. He loves pageants and outward ceremonies as if he were filled with a desire to

demonstrate with what ease he can summon armies and splendour around him.

It is interesting to note the impression he creates in France. In Paris especially the discussion he arouses is ever keen and alert, and to bring his name into conversation in a Paris *salon* is always an excellent means of arousing violent controversy. "He is a genius!" says one. "No, a prig, a *cabotin*," says another. "He is the finest orator of the day, and if he wrote the leading articles in some of our papers, who could compete with him?"—"Bah! do you believe him capable of any serious work? *Allons donc!*"—"But look at his portrait—what a face, what eyes! He ought to have been a French general or the Emperor of France. He loves *le panache*, and so do we."—"It is a disgrace for a Frenchman to utter such words!"—"But, *mon cher*, I simply meant that he ought to have been born and educated in France. . . . He is not a Teuton; no, he has many qualities belonging to the Latin race." And at this point a person intervenes who immediately becomes the centre of the debate: he says, "I have seen the Emperor, and enjoyed long conversations with him." Then every one present is eager to listen, and detractors and admirers alike await in fervid silence the opinion of the person who has actually met the ruler of Germany face to face.

Above all things the Emperor hates the small commonplaces of ordinary conversation, even within

the restricted space of a Court circle where all are bent on finding whatever he says clever and gracious.

I shall never forget the three days I spent under the same roof with the Imperial German pair at the princely castle of Sigmaringen. Sigmaringen Schloss has for many hundred years belonged to the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern family, who bear no relationship whatever to the younger and more prosperous line—those Protestant Hohenzollerns who are now masters of the German realm. The oldest Hohenzollerns bow in deep worship before the fortune of their cadets, and are ever anxious to proclaim blood ties which may not in reality exist, while the younger branch occasionally deign to admit the vague kinship now lost in the darkness of bygone days. The King and Queen of Roumania had arrived at the castle beforehand in order to receive their imperial guests. The Royal abode was full to overflowing. A great number of German Princes and Princesses were assembled, together with Prince and Princess Leopold of Hohenzollern, in mingled fear and pleasure at the honour of meeting the German Emperor, who was related to most of them by some distant tie. Many of them were petty potentates who, while trembling to appear as his vassals, yet struggled against the secret conviction that such is the case. However, a great display of military pomp generally conceals all such emotions.

As soon as I entered the suite of apartments destined for me in the castle, I found on the large

table a complete programme of the festivities which were to follow the arrival of the Imperial pair, wherein also the exact dresses to be worn at the station and in the evening were defined. All around us the atmosphere vibrated with the excitement of the approaching visit, but during the afternoon I had a few moments which I could call my own. Gazing from the windows far away over the dark curving hills of the unknown land, I looked back into the past and remembered that the castle where we now found ourselves was in the hands of a Prince descended in the direct female line from the Murat and the Beauharnais families, who thus bore in his veins the blood of the French *bourgeoisie* and of the glorious soldier who was at one time inn-keeper and waiter. This visit paid by the German Emperor to the old feudal fortress somehow represented the visit of the present victor to the victories of the past, to the great Napoleon himself, by whose stern will German princes had in years gone by been forced to marry young girls of little importance such as "la petite Stephanie et la petite Murat."

At the station next day I felt disappointed to find such an immense crowd of Princes, officers, and high personages in gaudy uniforms, that I realised at once how utterly impossible it would be to catch even a glimpse of the Emperor. Bugles were sounded, troops were marshalled and paraded by, Court trains trailed along over thick red carpets; a high wall of human forms, all very tall and pompous, rose between

me and the place where the train would stop. Yet, when at last it did arrive, I actually saw the Emperor. I saw him in the narrow interstice left between the shoulder of a silk-clad Royal Highness and the sleeve of a hussar! But it was only as in a flash I saw the pale cold visage, the flaming eyes and stern mouth. In another moment the Emperor had sprung lightly to the ground, followed closely by the Empress, whose rippling laugh I heard quite near to me, while much kissing went on and affectionate greetings were exchanged. We all hastened to the *perron*, as we wanted to see the Emperor enter the carriage and bow to the crowd. After several minutes spent in a short promenade in front of the troops, he made his appearance at a spot where I stood only a few steps from him. The twilight was falling softly, and in the first glimmer of the evening shadows he appeared to me even more extraordinarily pale than at first sight. No smile parted his lips as he threw his eyes to the centre of the multitude gathered in his honour, and whose repeated and joyful exclamations seemed to leave him quite unmoved; but that look as it lingered and plunged to the very depths of the assembled people made every nerve thrill like the muscles of the Arabian steed who feels his master's fingers creep lazily through his mane.

The Emperor wore a black uniform set off by white metal buttons and silver ornaments; his black helmet, too, was bordered with silver. The Empress was in a soft white dress. We followed in the rear

of the gorgeous procession, and as we ascended the narrow streets of the small city to the roar of cannon, the chiming of church bells, and the hum of human cheers repeated from window to window, we seemed to wend our way through an ocean of harmonious sounds, while above towered the huge Castle with its terraces and balconies all ablaze.

We saw nothing more of the Imperial guests till evening, because they retired to rest and afterwards dined privately with the Princes present in the Castle; but at nine o'clock we all assembled in the vast state-room, and as each took his or her allotted place in the circle hearts were beating high, eyes kindled with impatience and eagerness. Fans and flowers trembled in small nervous hands, and ever and anon we turned towards the door whence the Royal *cortège* would descend into the hall by the three steps separating it from the state room. Yet I was not so lost in contemplation of the stately threshold for the remark suddenly to occur to me that I was the only person in that immense circle who belonged to the Latin race. But all the *dames d'honneur* and officials proved exceedingly kind and courteous, and if somewhat shocked by the freedom of my words or manners, never showed it, but treated the youthful foreigner like an honoured guest, telling me I must occupy first place in the circle as I belonged to a kingly court, and stationed me quite close to the door where two ushers stood on guard like two statues of gold and silver.

The first chamberlain enters and strikes thrice upon the ground with a long golden rod, reminding one of the three sharp blows given on the floor of the stage in French theatres when the curtain is about to rise. Then a great silence, a long pause, the door is thrown open, and the Emperor of Germany appears. The Queen of Roumania is leaning on his arm, and they stop for a few seconds before descending the three steps. His head, proudly thrown back, is resplendent in the full light concentrated on the spot by lamps and chandeliers. His military costume is of dazzling white, relieved only by the crimson ribbon of the Roumanian order across his breast, and he looks radiant though very grave. The Queen of Roumania glides along by his side in a dress airily traversed with threads of silver, which give it the effect of billows at rest under the gaze of the moon. The Emperor's face is serene, but it wears no smile, and again I admire those large wonderful eyes, eyes whose colour and depth and sternness can be compared to jewelled Toledo blades, where gold and iron blend like blazing rays of the sun and cold flashes of stormy lightning. With those eyes the Emperor of Germany might wander *incognito* and wearing a mask, yet never fail to be recognised. Taking care to keep his spurs from touching the fleecy clouds of the Queen's fragile train, he advances with measured steps, though his tread is elastic, impatient like that of a boy. The Empress, our King, the Count and Countess of Flanders, all follow in due order, but

I cannot spare a glance for their entrance. The Emperor and Queen have stopped suddenly right in front of us. I believe I really looked as startled as I felt, wretchedly embarrassed, yet so eager, so tumultuous in the way I made my reverence, that before addressing me the Emperor laughed, highly amused, and the Queen said to him: "Here's a little girl to whom this hour is of such deep meaning that she has not slept all night for thought of the honour and joy awaiting her. You can see how moved she is." . . . "Why so?" asked the Emperor briskly, throwing back his head, while a sense of fun crept over his open countenance. "Why so? This very young and imposing lady has already known so many great, so many remarkable men, far greater and more remarkable than myself. She has seen Emperors, too, I hear, so one more or one less cannot be of much account. I am told, madam"—and he spoke in grave tones—"that you have as a child enjoyed the rare privilege of spending long evenings with Victor Hugo in his home. Your Queen says that you have many interesting tales to tell about him. So how can you be moved in my presence when you have been in the presence of Genius?"

As I could not for the life of me find an answer the Emperor resumed. "You could never have believed, would you, that you possess over me a superiority which indeed I envy you? I have enjoyed almost all the sight-seeing worth the trouble, but I never saw Victor Hugo nor met any real

literary genius. Was he very much bowed down by old age? Did he speak distinctly? What were his favourite topics?"

By this time I had almost recovered my composure; the Queen smiled encouragement, and the Emperor drew me out little by little. He interrupted almost every sentence twice or thrice, putting sharp interrogations, which he uttered in an affirmative tone—questions such as this: "Am I not mistaken when I think"—whose clear meaning was —"I cannot be mistaken!" And he repeatedly bit his under-lip with teeth so sharp that the traces of them were seen on the pale skin, an imperious nervous habit which conveyed the idea of peremptory force and impatient wilfulness, an order to go on in a rapid way without bothering him with hesitation or useless details. He seemed to hold between his fingers an iron thread that guided my words. "You write in French, don't you? You'll finish by writing in your own language, won't you? I know you love writing French and speaking English. It is why I have addressed you in the language which is pleasantest for conversation—at least one of the pleasantest"—the Emperor corrected himself.

"English is also fast becoming the language of Courts," said I. A quick frown warned me that I was treading upon forbidden ground, and the Emperor cut me short in a murmured apology. "Well, we will talk of Paris, literature, and your own pursuits to-morrow. You see," and he turned

towards the immense circle that watched his every gesture, "I have all these people to entertain, many friends and acquaintances among them," and with hasty step he walked off. In the meantime our Queen had also lost herself in the group of Princesses, and I tried in vain to discover the place where her Majesty stood, as I wanted to thank her for having called the Emperor's attention to me. The German Empress was also the centre of a crowd of ladies, so I wandered listlessly through the gaudy multitude, when a light tap on my shoulder made me start, and I found myself face to face with my Queen.

"You have not been introduced to the Empress, and it is getting late, come along," so I followed obediently. Clad in a charming dress of yellow silk, the Empress, with face wreathed in smiles, was telling the ladies around her some incident that had happened in a Berlin hospital which she patronised and visited twice a week—some difference between nurses and doctors. She beckoned to us in a gracious manner, and, after shaking hands with me, continued her easy, lively narrative, after giving the newcomers a rapid description of the first part of her story. The German Empress is called all over the realm "Die echte Deutsche Frau," and no appellation could better describe her sweet placid countenance, her fair complexion, and the extreme modesty and *naïveté* of her speech and manner. There is something fresh and genuine about her which reminds one of the simple heroines celebrated by

German poets in *lieder* and ballads. When about to retire she said: "I have asked your Queen to send me her translation of your Roumanian ballads. I am so sorry you have not the book with you. I am passionately fond of folk-lore; that is what I call practical literature, and I like learning to know nations through the songs of the people. . . . No, I am not at all tired"; the Empress answered a question put by the Countess of Flanders. "Dear Marie, we travel *so* comfortably, and we see cheerful faces and feel the warmth of glad hearts whenever we cease to look upon our sweet German forests and hills and rivers. So travelling is quite a treat to us. The Emperor also likes travelling abroad, but my preference is for these journeys where at every turn of the road we find ourselves at home." The Empress was moving away and before her steps the crowd respectfully receded. "Have you noticed the diamond her Majesty wears in her hair—that solitary stone set high like a trembling star—or a tear?" asked one of the Princes of me, as I returned to my place. "It is a pathetic and precious gem, a relic indeed—the diamond which shone in Napoleon's triangular hat, *le petit chapeau du caporal*, when it was found by Blucher's troops under a tree after the battle of Waterloo. Go and have a good look at it." In haste I returned to where the Empress was, and, standing behind, tried in vain to perceive the huge diamond. Her Majesty was about to reach the door and disappear, when, turning round, she per-

ceived me, and with astonishing intuition exclaimed: "Now, you desire to see my jewels—don't be frightened, but come in front of me. These pearls are lovely, but too big. Look at the diamond; I always wear it." But it was in vain that I waited to hear from the Empress' lips any confirmation of what I had been told.

Next morning I awoke with that delightful and rare consciousness that something very bright and unusual had happened, and was about to happen again. An hour after I was walking briskly along the banks of the river, and as I watched the Danube glide peacefully by, the prospect of meeting the Emperor again fell on my soul as gently as the rays of the ascending sun. It was a cool, crisp morning, and streaks of blue mist hung round the trees and above the waters, and I said to the Danube: "Alack, dear rivulet, thou knowest not under what clear skies thy waves will ripple before reaching their goal. Thou flowest towards my own native land, dear little river, and there thou becomest as great and powerful as the sea. No wet mornings, no mists to lie heavily upon thee thus. Thou flowest fast to reach my native land."

After a long constitutional I decided, before returning to the Castle, to take a turn in the avenue called Prinzen Allee, where all the royalties and most of the inmates of the Castle were strolling about after early breakfast. Sovereigns and Princes were there, Princesses, Generals and Aides-de-camp,

and ladies in all varieties of costume. The Empress was in a light grey morning blouse, the Emperor in a shooting jacket; they talked to every one as each stopped to salute or curtsey. The Empress smilingly inquired how I had begun the day, whether by visiting or eating? and when I answered that I had preferred the latter exercise, she said: "You look too healthy and rational ever to become a starving poet." The Emperor was in high spirits, pointing at the trees, giving advice as to the training of dogs, and crossing the sward to pluck some wild flowers. Showing them to me, he said: "They are not so grand as your laurels, but very pretty. Now tell the truth, you have been near the river to freshen up your laurels?" . . . .

In the afternoon we took a drive through the beautiful dark forests that encircle Sigmaringen in a ring of sombre verdure. There in the soft silence of the wood we were startled to hear the sound of bugles, and a troop of horsemen rode rapidly past preceding a small group of riders. In the midst of the group rode the Emperor, clothed in the black uniform of the Todthussaren and mounted on a black charger. Again that set resolute expression hardened his visage, again his eyes looked far into the darkness of the forest with an awe-inspiring light in their dilated pupils. Like a statue of stone, like an image of Fate, he passed on heedless of our presence, casting never a glance on the carriages or their occupants. Later on I heard that the Emperor

had that very day been much disturbed and angered by news received from Westphalia, where great strikes had broken out among the workmen. Yet when again at five o'clock we took tea with the Royalties in the splendid museum of Sigmaringen Castle, to my unspeakable surprise another change of dress, another change of face and humour, was presented by the Emperor for our admiration. On both sides the old hall was adorned with glass cases containing marvels of ancient art gathered together by the rare taste of the late Prince of Hohenzollern. William IL then and there declared that he worshipped Albrecht Durer, and showed in his praise of old vases and skilfully chiselled silver, considerable proficiency in matters dear to antiquaries and connoisseurs. No object, however small, however darkened by the twilight of ages, escaped his shrewd scrutiny. He was utterly different from the Emperor I had seen in the morning, that imposing and gloomy black rider of the forest, yet to an acute observer the sternness of eye and visage were still there, glossed over for a few moments only.

"I teased you about those laurels this morning," said he, as he approached a corner where I had come upon a lovely Renaissance cup, whose dainty ornamentation had captivated my attention. "By-the-bye, where is the famous crown? I am quite disappointed. As soon as I arrive people hasten to inform me that I will meet with an extraordinary creature—a young girl who is *not* a Queen and *not* a

Princess, yet wears a crown—a crown of laurels, a crown given by the French Academy; and when I expect to see a real laurel crown for the first time in my life, here is the young person in question daring to show herself bare-headed in the evening, and wearing stupid bonnets in the daytime! Now, where is that crown? Do you keep it hanging over your bedstead, or put it out at the window for passers-by to admire?"

"Sire, Emperors and Kings wear their crowns on great occasions, but not even in the greatest moment of their existence are poets allowed to do so, or your Majesty would have seen mine yesterday and to-day. Our crowns are invisible—in fact they do not exist but in imagination; thus the wealth and realms which we possess are beyond the reach of mortal eye."

"And you are not exposed to the danger of losing them!" said the Emperor. "But do you mean to say you are going to remain a poet all your life? Will not the malady pass off like the measles? Oh, I don't joke—to me a woman who writes is a being who is absurd, ridiculous."

"I have been told before that your Majesty abhorred clever women, or the interference of women in any but domestic affairs."

"Oh, I don't go such lengths. Clever women are dangerous women, one and all, who ought to be muzzled before they can bite, but do you believe it is necessary to be a clever woman to be a woman

who writes? On the contrary, women's cleverness consists in avoiding ridicule, and clever women are those who care for their good looks. Now can a woman who writes remain pretty? The gestures, the attitude of a woman scrawling away with all her might must utterly rout every æsthetical effort on her part. Can a woman remain pretty when she is obliged to put on that particularly stern frown with which one pursues an idea, or studies any serious and important subject?" The Emperor stopped, evidently waiting for a confused or a spirited answer, then he resumed: "Now, you are very intelligent, much more than I could have believed a woman who writes would prove. You are actually as smiling, as cool, as unaffected as if I had not wounded your highest notions of womankind—perhaps your own self-love."

"I have no self-love, sir, but very firm convictions that nothing can defeat."

"Anyhow you are very good-natured and neither pretentious nor forward. I am going to concede one or two points to you, though you do not seem to care whether I consider womankind pushing or not. Music and painting may render a woman's existence very happy—even beneficial to her family, and—I will allow that a woman is not quite unsexed for being a poet. Women are unreasonable, so are poets: women are born to comfort and to enhance the joy of living, and so are poets. Well, a poet you may remain without exasperating me completely!"

"I thank your Majesty for his gracious permission." The Emperor laughed, and as the Empress came to his side he added: "I have been giving this poor young lady a bit of my mind about femininism and women who write novels."

"The Emperor is the friend of poets, whether they be men or women," said the gentle lady, "and I must give him the Roumanian ballads to read."

At dinner that day the Emperor proposed a toast in honour of the Hohenzollern family and the Royalties, his cousins and peers assembled there—with whom, said he, the Empress and himself had been so pleased to spend hours which they would never forget. The speech, though short and simple, was eloquent and full of vigorous sympathy; flame-like it spread from soul to soul, and, delivered in a voice whose ring fell like metal on the ear, it resounded through our hearts, and gave every one present the sensation that each was in direct communion with the speaker.

Before the Imperial pair left the Castle, such persons as had been admitted to conversations of any length with them took private leave of their Majesties. Thus I was ushered into a little blue drawing-room, where the Emperor and Empress were waiting to bestow a parting word.

"I wish you good luck," said William II., "and heaps of laurel crowns—so many that your hair and brows may be quite hidden under them. Is not that a kind wish?"

"No, no," corrected the Empress, "I wish you happiness in whatever form you may like to enjoy it, and peace."

I stooped low to kiss the proffered hands, and then joined the ladies and officials who were waiting in the hall. Presently from every door Princes and Princesses came pouring in, and the German Sovereigns, who had already bidden these adieu, glided simply through the circle, bowing right and left. The *Heit die in Sieges Kranz* struck up, and thus they passed from our view.

Many a time since then have I met the two Imperial travellers, many a time at the Italian Court, and many a time had to approach them. But nowhere as in that straggling fortress of the obscure Middle Ages nowhere as in those woods and gardens, did the real character of William II. reveal itself to my attentive eyes. Nowhere better than in the sombre forest, by the banks of the young Danube, did I learn to judge what is strange, and to admire what is admirable, in the Emperor of the German Realm.

THE CZAR AND CZARINA

No three monarchs belonging to the same dynasty could have differed more than the Emperors of Russia who successively occupied the Muscovite throne during Queen Victoria's long reign.

Every one knows what a haughty and violent though melancholy ruler was the Czar Nicholas I., and how often he repeated the famous words which revealed his imperious temper: "There is but one person in Russia, the man to whom I speak, at the moment I am speaking to him." (*Il n'y a qu'un homme en Russie, celui auquel je parle, au moment où je lui parle.*) He was preceded on the throne by his brother, the dreamy and mysterious Alexander I., the irreconcilable enemy of Napoleon, though more than one effort did Bonaparte make to win his friendship. Many strange and marvellous things are related concerning the Czar Alexander I. He possessed very strong religious feelings, and the recent publication of his correspondence with the famous Madame de Kruchner shows how vivid was the interest that he took in the connection between the visible and invisible worlds, and that he put the greatest faith in

the declarations of mediums as to their communication with the spirits of the dead. His extreme piety, together with his sweet and gentle disposition, gave birth to many legends, one of which still remains dear to the hearts of his people.

It is a common belief amongst the lower classes of Russia, especially the priests and monks, that the Emperor Alexander I. did not die on the day on which he is supposed to have breathed his last, but that an empty coffin was lowered into the vault where the remains of the Romanoff family repose. This was done by his own expressed wish, in which his wife, the Empress Elizabeth, acquiesced, and while the whole nation was praying for the soul of the departed potentate, a quiet, plainly-attired moujik stole away from the crowd of courtiers gathered round the new Czar. Protected by the robe and hood of a wandering pilgrim, he travelled on and on until he reached a solitary spot in the midst of the vast Russian plain. There for many years he lived like the anchorites of old. It was only once a year during the Easter festivities that he made his appearance in the capital, and then he used to go straight to the Imperial Palace. His stature was so erect, his bearing so dignified and noble, his look so gentle yet so commanding, that no one ever dared refuse him admittance. He would walk from hall to hall, his arms and feet bare, and his long white hair and beard sweeping over his neck, stopping only when he reached the threshold of the Czar's private

apartments. The chamberlain who ushered him in never closed the folding doors behind the silent visitor without waiting to observe that the Czar, worshipped like a demi-god by all, yet stooped low when the stranger entered and reverently kissed his shrivelled hand. The hermit in time became a well-known figure, but no prayers or entreaties could ever detain him more than one day in St. Petersburg, and when at last he died he was buried there beside his forefathers in the fortress chapel. The legend is quite affirmative as regards the latter point, and the Emperor Alexander I. is cited by the monks as an example to those who live in austerity and who aspire to holiness. This interpretation of Alexander I.'s somewhat sudden illness and death shows that the worship rendered by his subjects to the Ruler of the Russian Empire is loyal and sincere, not only because his realm is as boundless as that of any monarch of legend, and his dominions resemble those of King Philip II. of Spain, upon which the sun never set, but simply from the mere fact that the reigning Muscovite Czar is supreme head of the Russian Orthodox Church. He is the sole representative to his subjects of God upon earth, endowed, as were the Kings of France during the Middle Ages, with the gift of healing by his touch and of curing maladies and all distress by his presence. Superstition has raised this spiritual power to a supreme point, and often when the Czar drives through the streets of Kief or Moscow

moujiks, women, and children fall frantically on their knees before the horses of his state carriage, begging the coachman to let the hoofs and wheels pass over their bodies, that they may in some way enter into touch with the "Little Father" from whom all blessings spring.

Nicholas I. entertained an almost supernatural idea of his absolute power and constant communion with the Almighty. He was, therefore, dumfounded to find during the Crimean War that the Lord of Hosts had apparently abandoned one who was in such close relationship to heaven. He remembered with bitterness how different was the fate of Russia during his brother's reign, when victory was obtained against the Great Victor, the French Emperor, before whom all Europe had trembled, yet whose glory was scattered like the flakes of snow under which his army was buried. Then the will of the Almighty had been clearly manifested; Nicholas I. marvelled why he should now be defeated and humiliated; and, still pondering upon the strangeness of the case, he died soon after the conclusion of the war.

His son and successor, Alexander II., was unlike his father in many respects. Of a sweet, yielding disposition, he possessed none of the self-assurance of his haughty and imperious father. His private life was not a happy one; he lost his eldest son, a charming youth, and he heard the stifled murmurings of future revolutions rise around his throne. It is

a singular fact that it was under the reign of the first Russian Czar who took a real interest in the fate of the lower classes, who delivered the Russian peasant from servitude, that Nihilism should have sprung up, and he, the magnanimous ruler, was almost its first victim. Without having known Alexander I. personally, still I have heard much about his character, ideas and conversation, as he made a long stay in our country on two occasions during the Russo-Roumano-Turkish War. My own father also had several opportunities of approaching the Czar at Plevna, where our King, then only Prince of Roumania, was acting as Commander-in-Chief to the Allied Armies. Much esteem and regret is felt for his memory by those of my countrymen who met the Czar then as he travelled from village to village, followed by an innumerable staff. An immense host of servants preceded him, and tried hard to make the sordid Bulgarian huts, where the Emperor had to pass the night, as comfortable as possible. This produced a strange and almost painful contrast between the miserable poverty of the scene, the clay floor, the mud walls, the roof so low that it was almost impossible for a tall man to stand erect under it, the narrow windows and look of indescribable wretchedness that hung over the whole place; and the heavy gold plate upon which the Emperor's meals were served, the gorgeous livery of his retainers, the richly embroidered counterpane thrown across the narrow bedstead—in a word, the pompous array of splendid

grandeur by which a Czar is ever surrounded. Throughout the whole campaign people noted the unusual expression of fatigue and sadness upon the Emperor's countenance, though his slim, handsome figure held itself erect as ever, and he tried to smile when called upon to distribute praise or encouragement.

"It cannot be denied," said my father, "that the Emperor was kind and amiable, but what endeared him to all was his face, in which an expression of pathetic sadness was always struggling with pride and fortitude. He looked great indeed when I rode near him on the morning of August 30, 1877. We were not three gunshots distance from Plevna. It was St. Alexander's Day, so to celebrate the Czar's Feast Day a sudden attack on Grivita—one of the enemy's best defended fortresses—had been planned, and we expected that the sun which rose in all its summer fairness would set upon scenes of bloodshed and victory.

"Those few moments after dawn the sight of the army was splendid to behold. As far as the eye could reach, swords, plumes and bayonets glittered in the dazzling light of an Oriental morning. Flags fluttered, trumpets sounded, and an air of festivity pervaded the warlike throng; while above us, black against the dark blue sky, rose the menacing forms of those towers from which death would fall upon us in a few hours. Suddenly an intense silence fell upon the multitude, as one by one the Orthodox priests

advanced, magnificently attired in vestments of gold and silver brocade. The Emperor's own Chaplain took the lead, holding the holy images of the Saints high above his head. At that moment from the opposite side of the field appeared the Emperor, followed by his Generals and Aides-de-Camp. He rode into the middle of the wide circle, while frantic cheers rose from every side to greet him. The priest lifted the Image and the Cross to the Imperial lips. The Emperor stooped slightly to meet them and then took up his place in the centre of the group of officers to which I was attached. I was only a few steps behind him, and could see his every movement. The divine service began in the high, grave tones of the Russian liturgy, hymns of praise to the Almighty which we all repeated in our hearts in accents of earnest entreaty, and whose meaning took such deep import from the place and the circumstances in which they were uttered. The Emperor sat motionless in his saddle ; his face was stern and set, and he retained during the whole ceremony the same air of pride and determination, but his large soft eyes wandered along the dense lines of the regiments. No doubt his thoughts ran in the same channel as ours, no doubt he was saying to himself, 'Only God knows how many of these brave fellows will be senseless or plunged in agony before to-night,' and I noticed that the hand which held the rein trembled slightly, while the 'White Father' prayed for his Russian children as well as for their Roumanian friends.

"As the Emperor turned his charger's head to leave the field he cast another long, troubled look over the mass of uniforms, horses and lances, and his lips moved murmuring words whose import I could not catch as they were in Russian, words perhaps of leave-taking and benediction, and then, amid a tempest of acclamations, the aged monarch passed from our sight. The afternoon of that terrible day is one never to be forgotten by those who, like myself, deafened by the roar of guns, blinded by gunpowder, and drunk with the wild exaltation of the moment, rushed to the assault. After losing our best officers and bravest soldiers, we at length became masters of the place, but when, weary and haggard, mere wrecks of humanity, we tried to regain our encampments, we had to wade through a lake of blood in which corpses lay thick under the starlit sky. The following morning the same religious ceremony took place as had been held the previous day, but how altered were the countenances, the attitude of those who, though victors, mourned the loss of so many brothers and comrades! No Te Deum was to be sung, but a solemn mass in honour of the glorious dead. Amidst the deep silence the Emperor made his appearance, a strange pallor overspreading his fine features, while his eyes were cast down during the whole of the divine service. I do not think I have ever seen such fervour and ardour as he displayed while the priests slowly chanted the Requiem and raised their hands to heaven. Almost

immediately after the Mass the Te Deum was rendered in thanksgiving for the possession of the Grivita Heights, whose conquest was really a proud achievement for the Roumanian Army. Again the Emperor tried to force a smile, but there was on his lips a shade of sadness which made me in after years imagine that some strange presentiment of his own tragic and untimely end must have crossed his mind at that moment. We learned to love him well in the Bulgarian Plains. . . ."

Of the four Russian Emperors whom I find it necessary to mention here, Alexander III. proved himself most faithful to the dictates and sentiments of his race. He was a thorough Muscovite, the father and apostle of Panslavism. A barbarian in many respects, he was a true representative of his own predominant idea that Russia should rule Europe by the strength of all that is most profoundly Russian or most truly adapted to the Russian spirit. He it was who prescribed the almost exclusive use at Court of the Russian language, which had been laid aside in favour of French during the two preceding reigns. On this point he insisted with obdurate persistency. He loved France and England well, better indeed than any other nations, but he loved them for their own sake, and refused to let his empire be influenced by ideas and facts and books which did not have their roots deep in the Russian soil.

"I will not hear any language but my own spoken

in my presence," he said, "so long as there are no foreigners in our country to whom we have to be civil. Literature as well as everything else will benefit by the gratification of my supreme desire to see the upper classes in Russia resume studying the language of our forefathers."

Though self-willed and sometimes violent in the development and accomplishment of his political views, in private Alexander III. showed a lively disposition. He was a kind and indulgent husband and father, and simply worshipped his frail and delicate Empress, the charming Princess Dagmar, whom he had received as an inheritance from his dying brother, and whom he prized as a jewel more precious than any in his Imperial crown. But at the very dawn of her beautiful and gracious motherhood the sweet and adored Empress lost the stalwart companion of her youth—Alexander III. went down to an early grave. . . .

I would no more think of attempting to describe a personage, whether royal or belonging to a less exalted rank, without making mention of his ancestors, his education, and the atmosphere in which he had developed, than I would launch into the endeavour to describe some landscape or monument without mentioning the lights and shades by which it was surrounded, and the people who have drawn comfort or distress from the sight of it. In contrast to what I have related of his forefathers, the present Emperor of Russia will stand out in striking relief.

He is neither haughty and imperious like his namesake Nicholas I., nor melancholy and dreamy like Alexander II., nor does he in any way resemble his father Alexander III., whose strong, wilful temper almost verged on stubbornness, whose aspect was that of a giant, and whose timidity was only equalled by his great kindness and the almost violent grasp which he laid upon an idea, never allowing it to escape from him till he had carried it out in its entirety. Nicholas II. takes after his Danish mother, and, as every one knows, he is almost the double of the Prince of Wales, his first cousin. I cannot, however, understand how people can actually mistake the one for the other, since every time I see the Prince of Wales I am struck by the thoroughly English expression of his physiognomy, while in my opinion few faces are more characteristic of the type of the clever young Russian student than that of the Czar. He has besides the eager manner that belongs to this particular type, though the education bestowed upon him as Hereditary Grand Duke has done much towards giving him the gravity and dignity necessary to his high rank. The Czar was still Czarewitch when I first saw him, and he then gave me such a sense of youthful enthusiasm and freshness of mind that it is with wonder I read now in the papers accounts of ceremonies at which he has to preside with a countenance suitable to the occasion, and I am dismayed to hear how silent and grave he showed himself during his two visits to France. It

is true I had seen the Czarewitch on an occasion when he had no official part to play, but simply showed a passing act of courteousness. On our way from one train to another in a German station, he stopped to speak to our Queen, who appreciated his delicate nature and fine intellectual qualities. I cannot explain how it was that these two high personages, both travelling *incognito*, came to meet in the dingy, stifling air of this place, amid the deafening whistle of panting steam-engines, and should thus be led to speak of literature and art, but the Czarewitch had not been with us two minutes before he said:

"I love travelling but only when I can do it in my own way. I never travel otherwise than at night, and spend my day visiting museums and quaint old streets, bazaars when I am in the East, antiquarian shops when I am in the North. I am more of an Asiatic than a European in my tastes, and I have not only a vast collection of Indian curios and quite an army of Buddhas large and small, but also a library composed of books treating of Indian subjects alone, and another of books dealing with Egyptian lore. Were I not—well, what I am—I should be the greatest bookworm in the world."

There was a flash of enjoyment in the large grey eyes as he mentioned his favourite pursuits, then he went on:

"I should like to live half my life completely in Russia, hear only Russian spoken, and see things

that are solely Russian, then spend the rest of the time in running over the world and bringing back its treasures to my darling country." A touch of his father's patriotism illumined the last words. "But then, one can never realise all one's castles in the air, and duty is a beautiful thing simply because it is gilded over with the light of personal sacrifice. Besides, are we not often most attached to the desires that we know we can never accomplish?" The whirl of busy travellers eddied around us while I gazed earnestly into the face of the future Czar, a face whose expression was intense yet dreamy. A very slight brown moustache softened the outline of his upper lip. His figure, his hands, his every movement, were fragile and elegant, reminding us of those slim Marquises who at the Court of Louis XIV. brushed the dust of the battlefield off the gilded lace of their sleeves, and talked of bloodshed and perils as they glided gracefully through the intricacies of a minuet. Yet the expression of the Czarewitch's face was marked with decision, and his features recalled those of the Muscovite race. "What a pity," I thought, as I gazed upon his form and listened to his witty conversation, "what a pity that one day this clever and buoyant personality must be chained to a throne! . . . But how proudly he will wear a crown!" was my next reflection as the light of patriotism dawned in his eyes and played round his features — the gaze with which his ancestors looked down upon the kneeling millions

from the heights of palaces or the threshold of altars.

But the Emperor who is an enthusiast as regards Asiatic religions and Asiatic art, who loves Indian splendour and the glow of dying Byzantium, is also the most European of all the three Emperors, his predecessors. He does not strive to exclude modern ideas from his Empire, and is, indeed, very liberal-minded, a quality he has acquired during his numerous voyages and intimate intercourse with his English cousins. His marriage with a Princess belonging to an enlightened family has increased these tendencies.

The same year that I encountered the Czarewitch my good fortune brought me in momentary contact with the beautiful Princess who was to be his spouse. We were staying at Wiesbaden with our Queen, and one rainy afternoon her Majesty had decided to call upon Bach and Beethoven in place of regretting the absent sunshine. Strict orders were, therefore, given that no one was to be admitted but the persons belonging to the Queen's most intimate circle. We were gathered round the piano listening to the great master's inspiration with rapt attention when a slight sound at the door caused me to rise and inquire into the cause of the disturbance. The Queen's footman stood there with a troubled expression on his face. "If you please, ma'am," he said, "there are two ladies downstairs; they wish to see the Queen immediately. I told them it was impossible for them to do so, but they insist."

"The Queen does not receive without being asked for the favour of an audience."

"I told them so, ma'am, but they are *so* determined. They are very pretty, they must be actresses. . . ."

"Great ladies, perhaps, Princesses . . . .?" I put in.

"No, no, ma'am, actresses, of course. They are pretty and so simply dressed. Besides," and he drew himself up with dignity, "*I* know all the Royal Highnesses in the world."

I could not then stop to interrogate him, but since then I have often wanted to know why the man who knew all the Royal Highnesses of the world should have decided that beauty and good taste in dress were the exclusive privileges of actresses!

"Will you go and tell them that you have spoken to me and that I am very sorry but that her Majesty is not in the habit of receiving in the afternoon. And ask them to tell you their names."

"I will go, ma'am, but all I say is of no use. There they have been in front of the hotel for the last twenty minutes. They will not go!"

By this time my curiosity was aroused and I decided to go down myself and have a peep at the pretty actresses. Opposite the front door was a landau in which were two ladies clad in mourning dresses of thick serge, who leaned forward as they perceived me. They seemed both very young and very pretty indeed. The fairer of the two said in

sweet, low, trembling tones, "We are due to leave by the six o'clock train, so please let the Queen know I must see her immediately." There was an authoritative ring in her gentle voice.

"But, madame, it is impossible. It seems to me that you can never have approached a Queen before, to think that you can thus be admitted into her Majesty's presence without any notice!"

"The Queen will be delighted to see me," and the unknown looked full into my eyes with a mischievous and alluring smile, while the dimples played in her rosy cheeks and her childish blue eyes were alive with fun. I began to feel rather uncomfortable but went on expostulating though feebly. Both ladies alighted, and I was returning in all haste to relate the adventure to the Queen when, before I had time to cross the threshold, the charming stranger had laid her hand on my arm.

"You see," she said, "I know who you are, I even know your several nicknames, and yet you cannot guess who I am. How amusing!" With these words she tripped gently into the room, and I heard the glad exclamation with which our Queen greeted her. "Dear, dear Irene, dear child—and unannounced, how nice, how awfully nice of you! Come in, Hélène, I must introduce you to the Princess Henry of Prussia, a young matron who is not at all fond of her husband. . . ."

"Your Queen is such a tease," said the Princess, blushing. "Only think, once she insisted that I

wanted to enrol myself as a lady sailor, and gather a fleet of ladies to follow our husbands when they go on long voyages! I must admit that I am very unhappy when the Prince is away. Without him everything is altered, life is *so* grey, *so* slow. But I must tell you, Elizabeth, this young girl wanted to send me away in a most disgraceful manner."

"And the footman mistook her Royal Highness for an actress because she was so pretty; he thought she could not be anything else," I rejoined. The Princess laughed, and I left her and the Queen in close conversation while I entered the small parlour where my sister had already struck up such a close friendship with the *dame d'honneur* that I felt sure she must be very amiable and clever. I always judge a princess by her lady-in-waiting, and this time I was about to crown the high opinion I had formed of the Princess Irene of Prussia by praising her choice of her *dames d'honneur* when I discovered that the lady in question belonged to the Court of Darmstadt and was the constant companion of Princess Alice of Hesse.

"Do come to Darmstadt," said she. "The Princess will be delighted if you will spend a few days with her. She is very remarkable, our young Princess, so serious and sincere, so quiet and correct in her appreciations of people. She has no taste for futilities, and dress, balls, even sport do not appeal to her much. She prefers her books, the study of her own soul, and the philosophy of

human life. She is proud, not of her birth, her rank, or her beauty as you might suppose, but of the great effort she daily makes towards the development of the better side of her instincts and talents. I wish you could see her and hear her converse. At first she seems cold and reserved, but by-and-by when she begins to feel in sympathy with her interlocutor her shyness and silence disappear. Then she speaks out on any subject she happens to choose. She has fairy hands and her needlework is extraordinary. I cannot help thinking that she will have a brilliant future and an existence full of splendid toil." And the charming lady went on to relate scenes from the quiet and serious Court life of Darmstadt till our one hope, our one desire, was to visit her there. When she left with the Princess we were quite excited over the subject till the Queen said:

"But, you stupid children, we are leaving for Roumania in two days."

Our countenances fell. "Without seeing Princess Alice and the incomparable *dame d'honneur?*"

"See them again," said the Queen, "why, you shall do so this very day. Put on your bonnets. We will accompany the Princess to the station."

The train was already in when we reached the platform, and my heart beat fast for fear we had missed the Princess. We were about to retrace our steps when Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein came to my rescue by saying to the Queen, "They

have not left yet. The train is due to stop twelve minutes longer, and I suppose that it will stop as long as we like. There—Alix, Victoria and Irene are in the carriages. I will tell them of your presence, and they will alight." Kind Princess Christian went to her nieces and in a few minutes they all alighted from the carriage, declaring how surprised and delighted they were to see the Queen. A very tall, slim girl stood shyly behind the Princess Irene and, though the stately Princess Victoria of Battenberg towered high above her, there was a touch of grandeur and dignity in her slender form which I had never seen before in one so young. She wore a broad-brimmed black hat from which hung a long feather of the same sable colour. The soft colour of her chestnut hair cast a radiance over her pure white brow and her haughty grey eyes glittered like the snow under a moonlit sky. The contours of her cheeks, her chin and profile, were harmonious while her lips firmly set spoke of a strong will though there was gentleness also in their curves.

"I must introduce my sister Alix to you," said Princess Irene, and the proud beauty stepped forward and with a graceful movement stooped to kiss the Queen's hand which, however, the Queen suddenly drew back. This gesture of graceful homage to one whose rank and years alike made her venerable was accomplished by the Princess Alix without abating a jot of her cold and imperious demeanour and no additional colour rose to her faintly tinged face. The

dame d'honneur who was now at her elbow pointed to us, and with a kindliness which changed her whole countenance, giving it a childish expression of eagerness, the Princess turned to us with outstretched hands.

"You will be able to manage this visit to Darmstadt, won't you? From what my lady-in-waiting says I am sure you would love our Court and that I shall love you. Do come. We have such fine forests all around. I hear you love music and poetry and recitations. We might get up theatricals, though for my own taste I prefer a poem read aloud, and read well, to the theatre. Poetry calms the soul and makes it strong. I am sorry we are leaving so soon . . ."

"And we are leaving, too, madam."

"For Roumania?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you are glad to return to your country?"

"Not this time, for we should have liked to go to Darmstadt so much. And we know your Royal Highness would be such a pleasant, gay companion."

"I am afraid this lady has been exaggerating as she always does when she speaks about me. Of course, I am gay sometimes, and sometimes I can be pleasant, I suppose, but I am rather a contemplative, serious being, one who looks into the depths of all water, whether it be clear or dark." The expression of majesty and repose returned to the beautiful

countenance and reminded me again of snow-lit mountains where sunshine and shade dwell by turns.

"Alix, take leave of the Queen and the ladies now. It is high time to do so." The words were spoken by the Princess Victoria of Battenberg and her motherly glance dwelt fondly on the lovely face of her young sister. The Princesses entered the railway carriage one by one, but Princess Alix remained in the corridor waving her handkerchief till she was out of sight and the last I saw of her as a Princess was that figure of proud loveliness carried away into the glorious future, into the haze of grandeur and happiness where she would still remain the cold and beautiful lady who loves all that is pure and grave.

MARGHERITA DI SAVOIA, DOWAGER QUEEN OF ITALY

After letting our eyes steep themselves in the pure abundant light that bathes the Seven Hills, with soul weary from their long dwelling on Rome's historic past, and dazzled by the splendour of these ancient glories which to-day lend a meaning to every step the clear-eyed traveller takes in Rome, we return slowly to modern life, and our carriage finds its place amongst the many vehicles wending their way towards the Villa Borghese or the Villa Pamphili.

A sudden motion in the crowd announces an event of such importance that, tired and dazed as we may be, we rouse ourselves and look with eager eye to discover the cause of the commotion. Windows fly open on every side, handkerchiefs are waved, the faces of the passers-by assume an expression of mingled satisfaction and devotion, while in vehement tones the passionate Italian words ring out: "La benedetta Regina—la nostra Margherita—Il nostro poi"—"The blessed Queen—Our own Margaret—Our own flower." And on the high seat of an im-

mense landau we see the gracious lady whose august yet familiar name resounds above the uproar. Four lackeys, in livery red as the embers of a winter fire, tower above the fair head, which moves in unceasing salutation, while a smile flickers like a flame upon the parted lips. Her complexion is so pale and clear that every vein may be traced on the temples and firm rounded cheeks, while the aquiline nose gives a touch of pride to the sweet features. The high landau advances, and the Queen continues to bow right and left with the same charming air of concern, while the smile flickers and varies but is never extinguished for a second. Yet while thus occupied with the passers-by, and occasionally lifting her eyes to the windows, the Queen does not cease to talk to the lady who is her neighbour or the gentleman-in-waiting seated in front of her. From what ancestress, from what tradition slumbering in her blood, has Queen Margherita learnt the science of a smile so subtle, so pure, so lavishingly spent?—a smile at the same time fascinating and haughty, careful to betray royal serenity, yet anxious to hold the popular favour, a jewel which the lowest and most obscure might find on the road to daily labour, as welcome as bread or flowers.

In passing from the Rome of bygone centuries to the Rome of to-day, a vision seems thus to send our thoughts back to the glory celebrated by chronicler and poet. No personage is more eloquent in favour of the strenuous efforts by which Italy has gained

her unity and freedom than the niece and daughter-in-law of the great King Victor Emmanuel. Except Queen Victoria, no queen of the nineteenth century could boast like Margherita of embodying in her one personality the fate of her people at once with the fate of her dynasty, since she was twice a *Savoia* and twice an Italian Princess before becoming Queen of Italy. She is the only one amongst Royal Consorts who has had no need to search for a throne in another country than her own; she alone can speak to her subjects in the language of her childhood, and she treasures in her heart all the faults and qualities of their race. She alone has given them a King of pure native descent. In his splendid "History of France" Michelet says: "A king's children must always, according to the nature of royal marriages, be as strangers in the land." From this imputation, at least, the King of Italy is exempt.

Every one knows how beautiful the life of Queen Margherita has been and how warmly she is beloved in every corner of her country. In the smallest Piedmontese village, as in the gorgeous towns of Southern Italy, every *contaddina* calls her "Our own Margherita," while the highest circles of society declare their King's mother to be accomplished in every art: to those who have never known her this sentiment may indeed seem akin to infatuation, since it pervades every class and finds not a contradictory echo to mar its sincerity. I do not seek here to relate the numerous anecdotes told about her, to

describe her daily occupations, nor to trace her biography. My chief aim in these pages is to render my impressions of kings and queens whom I have met and talked with, to describe as clearly as possible their characteristics, the very essence of their souls such as they were revealed to me on frequent occasions when the august personages with whom I was brought into close contact displayed before the eyes of a writer and poet sentiments they believed they were expressing in the presence of a mere woman of the world.

During the few months I spent in Rome—where my parents had passed part of the summer and autumn before my arrival, my father at that time representing his country at the Italian Court—my mother and he often spoke in fervent admiration of Queen Margherita and King Humbert, whom they frequently visited. But the terrible grief, the dire misfortune which had brought me to our temporary home in the fold of the Seven Hills, held my mind aloof from every distraction but my own trouble. Not all the glamour of the divine city, or the severe beauty o'erspreading its famous *agra romana ;* not the gentle light that descended from a sky fair as the bosom of a summer sea, nor the grandeur of the historic *palazzi ;* not the beautiful twilights floating over the Palatine and the Janicule ; not even the keen interest abroad in Rome in watching the struggle between spiritual and temporal powers, could succeed to divert me from my sorrow, or draw me out

of the abyss of tears into which I sank deeper every hour. The image of Queen Margherita dwelt in my mind only among the many images of beauty whose power was incapable of soothing my distress. Vainly when we met her in the streets would my mother say:

"There is the Queen—do look at her. See how she smiles; she has often spoken so nicely of you to me. . . . She receives us in a low dress always—it is the habit at this Court to receive foreign ambassadors in full dress. In many ways it is a very simple Court, but on the other hand its etiquette is rather complicated. . . . The Prince of Naples has told his mother a great deal about his visit to Roumania and about you. . . . Mother and son are so fond of each other. When he is away he writes to her every day and even twice a day sometimes. Do look at her."

But I scarcely raised my eyes and remained in my attitude of depression and indifference as the carriage passed our own, though the royal smile more than once alighted on my face, the vivid blue eyes searching deep into mine. I felt that the Queen knew and desired to show me more than a passing moment's interest, but the sight of the pompous emblems of her rank, even her compassionate glance, thrilled me with a sentiment of pain and stirred all the bitter pangs of memory in my soul. But Queen Margherita's kindness and Queen Margherita's will are not easily thwarted. In the early autumn my

mother had a long audience from the Queen. I thought that after this merely ceremonious interview my mother would return from the Quirinal delighted of course, but with no new experience, and that the burning subject of myself would have been carefully avoided by both. But my knowledge of the ways of the Italian Court was completely at fault.

"The Queen understands you so well," said my mother, "and she pities you so much. Without making any open allusion to the cause of your trouble, she spoke of it—beginning the conversation first, of course, as I should never have dreamt of her expressing sympathy in a case which so directly touches the laws and traditions of monarchy. These I do not think she would ever sacrifice. She is a Queen from head to foot, but she realises the extent of your sufferings; she says you are to her a pathetic sight as she meets you in her daily drives and sees you always in the same state of depression. She seems to see everything."

A few days after my mother's audience a lady belonging to the diplomatic circle came to me and said:

"Listen, dear child. Queen Margherita would very much like to see you—but a queen cannot invite people before they ask leave to present their homage to her. You required a hint, did you not? Well, I have come to suggest this: write to the Marchesa di Villamarina and beg the favour of an audience. The Queen will receive you immediately.

I speak almost as if I were entrusted with an official message. Believe me I do not speak lightly. Write.'

Here the Queen's tact and delicacy had discovered a means of accomplishing her will without allowing her dignity to suffer, so it was without a moment's hesitation that I wrote to the Marchesa di Villamarina, the Queen's dearest friend and a lady worthy of the affection and confidence bestowed upon her by her royal mistress.

The very next day we were, my mother and I, invited to call upon the Queen at two o'clock P.M. This was a somewhat hasty summons, and at a less conventional time than usual. Awake to the emotions of the hour, I considered the situation and tried with some dismay to guess what the Queen would say; I had been told that she was very fond of asking questions. In what light did she regard me and my thwarted fate? What could the Queen —who was twice a Queen by right of birth and right of marriage, and who always laid such stress on the right of Royal blood—find to say to one who might have been a Queen without possessing any of those rights?

These thoughts and many of the same kind rapidly crossed my brain as we saw the huge statues of Castor and Pollux flash past us as we drove through the large court of the Palace, environed on every side by its huge yellow buildings with a single beam of sunshine lying along the grey stones like a road of watery

light. In the hall a line of tall soldiers with glistening swords and helmets gave us the salute, and we mounted the soft staircase whose steps were so low and easy under our feet that we scarcely felt the ascent. In the large, wood-panelled antechamber were some ten or twelve lackeys clad in the same flame-coloured livery that we see on the Royal equipages in Rome and London. A short exchange of polite remarks took place with one of the *principessa romana*, who that day was the lady-in-waiting, and who kindly endeavoured to attract my attention to the valuable paintings collected in the blue drawing-room into which we were ushered. Then the Marchesa di Villamarina makes her appearance. This was the sign of a favour precious indeed, as the Marchesa is very busy and rarely receives the Queen's visitors, yet it was the Marchesa herself who beckoned to us and showed us the open door leading to the Royal apartment.

A vision of white and gold dazzled my sight as if we had suddenly come upon a landscape of sunlit snow, and the Queen's white dress and the Queen's fair hair seemed to throw all around a radiance of white and gold. In her hand she held a book which was slowly dropped on a stool, and while she signed my mother towards a low armchair, she drew me to her and placed me on the sofa by her side. Then, with a graceful yet determined movement, she swerved backwards to the other end of the sofa, and, still holding my hand, said:

"I want to look at you well. I have had so many pictures of you but not one is like. There is nothing like Nature after all—nothing like the living impression we receive from the living individuality."

Her neck and fingers were heavy with pearls and diamonds, and the flash of coloured gems trembled in her hair and descended over her brow; in the folds of her garments and around her the Latin Queen displayed richness worthy of a Byzantine Empress. The snowy whiteness of the sunlit chamber, the silk and velvet embroidered with golden flowers and silvery tracings, all the glistening splendour of her surroundings, revealed how highly the Queen placed the demands and glory of her rank and its attributes. Yet the contrast was singularly refreshing between so much pomp and the pleasant familiar voice that murmured on, swinging from one subject to another like a bird between the branches of a forest; vivacious and inquisitive, yet tinged with a variety of information and personal experience which showed plainly her leisure hours have not been given up to dreaming. Indeed, Queen Margherita's conversation is so attractive and full of point that it could be compared to the verses of those poets whose lyrics take to sudden flight among the stars, then all at once alight gaily upon the ground, and speak again of earthly matters with the same liquid language employed in their intercourse with the stars.

With marvellous ability Queen Margherit avoided entering into the cause of my grief, yet not

for a moment did she cease to talk of the sorrow for which she had seen tears upon my face.

"You should not, oh, you should not be so depressed. You are young and you are a poet. I love your writings, and so do all who read them. Then, is there anything more enchanting to a woman, or more soothing to her soul, than to hear these words murmured as she passes: 'She is a poet'? Do not think, though, that I am addressing myself to your feminine vanity. I speak to your reason, to your soul, to your sense of duty. How often I have vainly wished to be a poet myself! When in the blue mists of an autumn morning I follow the steep mountain paths I love, something in me sings a hymn of beauty and gratitude I am doomed never to utter in words. . . . You love Venice?" she continued. "Venice must make every one feel a poet: what, then, must a real poet feel in Venice? I followed all your movements while you were staying in Venice with your dear Queen. It is such a pity I could not come to you at that time. Venice is lovely, is it not?"

"Yes, madam, it is the city of joy."

"The city of joy—and you say so, you who have suffered and mourned in Venice? Why, there is a breath of unutterable sadness in the breeze among the lagoons, in the gentle murmur of the oars as they touch the stone staircases at night. You have not seen Venice with the eyes of Lord Byron."

"No, madam, but with the eyes of Titian, with

the eyes of the sun, who seems himself astonished at the gorgeous beauty which he awakens on the bosom of the waters before he sinks below them. It seems to me as if a mellow tune of laughter and joy glided over the lagoons between the high palaces. . . ."

"Yes, Titian, Veronese, the sunshine of Venice—*they* are elements of joy indeed! And Tintoretto—I worship Tintoretto, the glorious giant. The Giant's Staircase should be called so because of him. There are so many admirable descriptions of Venice, such a vast number of them, it seems as if the city shed the same glamour over all who attempt to describe it; but almost best of all others I love Pierre Loti's rendering of Venetian spells, Venetian charms. I read his pages over and over again when he speaks of Venice—he thrills me as keenly as Chateaubriand." Then she began to speak of our Roumanian Queen. "Oh, your Queen—how I love and admire her! I saw her often this autumn in Pallanza. Sometimes I would go to pay her a visit quite early while she was still in bed, and thus spent with her moments so delicious that I will never forget them. She is extraordinary. Her sufferings have not altered the sweetness of her nature. You don't know Pallanza, where she stays, do you? It is a charming little place, and she seems to like it very much. Shall I describe it to you? Look—here is the lake, and a long row of hotels are on this side." And Queen Margherita, with hands busily engaged in tracing the lines of the distant Italian landscape, succeeded

in making every detail of the small town live before our eyes, while her words made such vivid comments on her gestures that I could imagine the bright colours of the water and the trees, the soft splash of the oars, and the chime of the bells at evening as they echoed over the sunlit lake from village to village. Thus also I imagined her arrival on those autumn mornings whose softness bathes the Italian lakes in rich and mellow hues. In fancy I could see the fair Queen's barge approach the blue shore, and the breeze playing with her hair and veil; the crowds assembled in spite of the early hour, and their hearty greetings; and how she would enter Carmen Sylva's bedroom where the shadows of night still lingered, and how, dazzled by the light from within, she would at first scarcely distinguish the form of her royal sister. And I could almost follow the thoughts exchanged between these two in the course of a *tête-à-tête* which personages of their rank seldom enjoy, and the gay peals of laughter which would resound through the dim chamber.

"How gracefully, how majestically your Queen walks! Although she has now a little difficulty in moving fast, there is a cadence and suppleness in her every step. Yet she is not very strong; she says she feels as if her feet were in fetters or bound to the ground, and that she has a good deal of trouble in lifting them up. But her body is as straight as the flame of a torch. . . ."

We rose to take our leave. "You will come

back to see me, won't you? Now that you are in Rome I cannot content myself with the pleasure of only reading your works. Do come again. . . . Ah! I had almost forgotten the most important part of my duty, which I ought to have gone through at the very beginning of our conversation." And in a voice which she tried to make ceremonious and cold, the Queen said: "I hope you will enjoy your stay here, and be pleased with every one and everything in Italy. . . . Do come again," she said, resuming her natural tones. "You see, I often forget the teachings of etiquette, but really I am sure your visit to me has done you good. There is such a glow on your cheeks, and quite a light in your eyes—I am an excellent doctor. Come again; come soon."

Notwithstanding these gracious injunctions, I spent many months without expressing a wish to return to the Quirinal, though the memory of the Queen's charm and her sympathetic kindness dwelt with me, and had indeed created a powerful diversion in my life. Members of my family had at that time the honour of approaching her Majesty very often, and on such occasions she never failed to inquire after me. I may say that scarcely a week passed without my receiving from the august lady such tokens of interest as go straight to the heart. When we made up our minds to leave Rome, as my father desired to return to our Roumanian home, the prospect of our departure was terrible to me in every way. I loved Rome with that passionate love which makes

us cling to places where we have tasted pain or hope most keenly; besides, "the city of the soul" had wrought its spells upon my mind, and I felt at my ease amongst its beauties and all the sadness of its palaces and stones. Added to the other pangs of separation, sorrow at leaving Queen Margherita's neighbourhood, having to sacrifice the daily consolation of her smile and the soothing influence of her presence, weighed me down completely. Besides, every one had shown me great kindness, in the highest society as well as in the humbler classes, and into the solitude and silence of my life such sympathy had come that the idea of bidding farewell to the places and beings amongst whom my grief had found consolation, proved a terrible trial. And I had to say farewell to the Queen. In my farewell to the idol of the nation all other farewells would be comprised.

The Queen knew we had asked for this audience in order to take leave of her. She smiled sadly.

"So you are going? Oh how I pity you. No one who is able to understand Rome can depart from this glorious city without bitter regret. Every cloud in our skies, every blade of grass under our feet has a significance of its own. I pity you. Must you really go?"

"Alas, madam, yes."

I had never seen Queen Margherita look so beautiful as that day. Her eyes really were of the violet hue of Mediterranean gulfs, and her violet

dress besprinkled with golden flowers fell around her like the shades of a Roman twilight on its gardens and terraces.

"I have come to your Majesty just before our departure. I have craved the honour of this interview not only from a desire to thank the Queen for her sympathy and graciousness, but to thank the Italian nation and all the people of this land. I want to thank them in the person of the lady whom the nation adores. Your Majesty is the symbol, the idol of the land, and at her feet will I lay my thanks. Every one has been so good, so attentive to me—to the stranger who came bearing with her a world of sorrow and despair."

"Yes, I know, I am certain that every one has been kind to you, but this I pray you to remember," and the Queen proudly raised her head, while the diamonds in her hair shone so brightly that the aureola of several crowns seemed to encircle it; "this I beg of you to remember—Italy has not been kind to you through mere kindness. Italy is still the land of chivalry and romance. You are a woman and a poet, and you are unfortunate, abandoned and weak. To become a heroine in our country nothing more is required than the wounds inflicted by Fate or love. Had you come to us in prosperity you would not perhaps have been received thus, and might not have been able to understand all the generosity of this nation. But when this happens, when you *are* happy again—and you *will* be happy—return to Rome

and let Rome see you smile as Rome has seen your tears."

"The King—how can we prove our devotion and gratitude to the King? Can we ever forget his concern and his goodness!"

"Oh the King, he is the most chivalrous among them all! I will repeat to him all you have said about Italy and himself, and he will be delighted, but more pleased because of Italy than on his own account."

The room where white and gold gleamed like sunlit snow was now bathed by the last rays of a dying autumn afternoon. The windows were open, and in the silvery haze of the coming twilight the whole city lay; like a fortress St. Peter's dome stood high above all the other church spires, and I thought of its spiritual import, and said in my heart that in the Palace, too, a spiritual force was dwelling, pure as the pure robes of the aged Pope. That the Queen who so proudly proclaimed her joy in being the wife of a chivalrous King in a chivalrous land should one day weep in the horror of a tragic hour, and see him meet a doom of violence, nothing then seemed to foresay. Peace was in her and all around her when she smiled her farewell to us in that sunny chamber on the heights of the Quirinal hill.

KING VICTOR EMMANUEL III. AND QUEEN HELENA

It is singular to note that although all the encomiums usually bestowed upon Princes have been accorded to the present King of Italy, and although his reign is already three years old, very little is known about his real personality. Anecdotes and descriptions have endeavoured to make of him a familiar figure, but in vain. There is a lurking vein of mystery about his personality which extends even to his exterior aspect. He converses very little with strangers, and his political *entourage* cannot boast of obtaining from him many definite pronouncements which might give a precise idea of his opinions and tastes. In Italy more particularly, complete ignorance prevails regarding the temperament and aspirations of the young King. Ability is the one thing every one allows him to possess; and from Rome to Palermo, from Milan to Naples, public report agrees in depicting him a perfect soldier, as well able to command as he formerly was to obey. But the special quality which has endeared the House of Savoy to

the Italian people, the quality which the nation prefers to all other characteristics of that ancient race, seems somewhat wanting in the King, though he is intelligent, far-sighted, brave, and worthy in most respects of his glorious descent.

In every spot where the noble House of Savoy has left traces of its brilliancy and heroism, in cities both of Italy and France, pictures are to be found which portray Knights, Earls and Dukes belonging to this race, which boasts a lineage more ancient and more glorious than even that of the Hapsbourgs. The Savoy Princes appear to have been especially careful in bequeathing to future centuries the presentment of their countenances and their garb—the latter intended to adorn a Court pageant or dazzle the troops in the gay sunlight of a battlefield; while their Princesses look down upon us in haughty disdain, or smiling complacency from the walls of innumerable museums and palaces. Beneath these portraits inscriptions tell us that the beautiful dame represented was a Queen by marriage, or perchance the mother of a King. Thus Francis I., one of the most valorous and most popular rulers of France, was the son of a Savoyard Princess, the famous Duchess Louise of Angoulême, who for years lived in fear that her beloved son might miss the throne, should a child be born to the old King of France, Louis XII., he having, after the death of his first wife, married Mary Tudor, sister to Henry VIII. Another Princess of this race was the young

Duchess of Burgundy, who came to Versailles before she was ten years of age to marry Louis XIV.'s grandson, and whose sad history has been told at length by one of the most famous French historians. Yet no historical sketch, no legend relating the past splendour and valiant deeds of this chivalrous and gallant dynasty, can in any way compare with the accounts given of them by the present King of Italy himself when he takes up the subject casually in conversation. He possesses, in addition, a wonderfully accurate knowledge of the individual character of each personage among his ancestors. Their great deeds, their perilous adventures and misfortunes, their triumphs and glory, are made to live again as soon as in his own feverish manner he takes up the tale and begins to wax eloquent.

During my extensive travels I have come across many documents and pictures connected with the House of Savoy—"la casa di Savoia" as it is called in Italy—and many a time has my heart been stirred while poring over dusty folios or wandering through long galleries, where paintings endowed with the eternal youth of art hang on each side like a phantom army. Yet two vivid impressions remain in my mind which, while I live, will shed a splendid lustre over the simple word "Savoy" in my thoughts. The first was the occasion when I heard Victor Emmanuel III. recall to memory one after another the warriors and princes to whom he owes his illustrious blood. The second impression is a very recent one.

It came to me in one of my rambles through the archæological treasures of France. I had gone to see one of the many gems of architecture raised by piety in that fair land, and while I wandered through the church, white and luminous as the cathedrals of Italy where a feeling for pagan beauty has not been obliterated by the thrill of adoration and awe so impressive in Gothic aisles, the living language of the eloquent Prince seemed to mingle with the silence that enshrouded the snowy tombs, and in my imagination the Royal words seemed allied to what the silence said.

On the stained-glass window knelt a Duke of Savoy, so deep in prayer that he had let his gauntlet fall on a cushion by his side, and did not even see behind him the form of his patron saint listening to the deathless orisons. For centuries the handsome young Duke has prayed on in that church, little witting that the territory on which it stands has passed away from his line, oblivious to everything save his devotions. Not far from the altar is the place where his dust is laid. Never more will he take up his gauntlet again, nor cover his fair curls with the heavy helmet clasped to his breast, yet still he prays on.

In that church the tombs all round speak more of love than of death. Gazing on the sculptured masterpieces whose outlines seem to melt into the silvery twilight, we forget that the Princess who built the shrine, the dreamer whose vision is here pictured in

stone and coloured glass, was a powerful, strong-souled woman, daughter of a German Cæsar, aunt to Charles V., and Governor of the Netherlands. Hers was no life of prayer and solitude, but an ever active existence, bent on political power and deep designs. More than once, we are told, she armed herself and rode on horseback to make or unmake treaties and alliances—a woman alike feared and honoured in Council and among the nations under her sway.

In the convent Church of Urm it is her love-story that alone appears—a romance to thrill the poet and the traveller. To these Margherita di Savoia, wife of Philibert the Handsome, is a truly pathetic figure. Betrothed to the young French Dauphin, who sent her back to her father because he wished to marry the wealthy Duchess of Brittany, she afterwards became the widow of King Juan of Castille. Fate seemed to pour its bounties at her feet when she espoused the Duke of Savoy and settled with him in the wealthiest part of his rich dukedom, but ill fortune again intervened, for the beloved husband died after two years of happiness. Despair took possession of her, and in memory of the man she loved the proud, sorrowing Princess built the church where the royal lovers now rest side by side. She caused the image of her dead husband to be carved and painted three times, and her love has prevailed over the waves of time and discord, so that to-day the gem of art stands erect and beautiful shining from

amongst the trees to tell its tale of fidelity and immortal affection.

It is in the handsome features of Duke Philibert, thrice repeated in stone and glass, that the characteristics of the race of Savoy may be best seen and traced to their source. The languor yet extreme manliness of the features, the firmness of the strong hands closed over the helmet, the look that the Prince lifts to the holy Cross before which he is kneeling—all bear testimony to the vigour, the ardour and the piety bequeathed by the dynasty to its descendants. Between the fervent spirit of the kneeling Duke and the soul of the present King of Italy, how many different personalities have intervened, what powerful hereditary tendencies have been mingled in his blood by unions with almost every royal house in Europe! His fathers have been allied with the families of Austria and Bourbon, and with the families of Italian Princes of races now extinct, yet a near parentage survives which links him to the figure of that silent worshipper in the church at Urm, as well as to the heroes whose deeds have graced the records of the Casa di Savoia. Any one who has the honour of approaching Queen Margherita's son may easily trace in him such remains of mediæval feeling mingled with modern ideas as may serve to render him interesting to those who look to find in the living the relics of the long dead past.

Victor Emmanuel III. may be called the child of

joy and happy expectation. Born at a moment when every heart was bent upon the triumph of Italian Unity, he acquired from both his father and mother the blood of the same glorious ancestors, for Queen Margherita and King Humbert were first cousins. Naples, that city where joy raises her altars under the fairest sky that poets can sing, the beautiful city crowned with flowers and over-shadowed by her graceful volcano—Naples gave him her name. When the twenty-second boom of the cannon announced that Margherita, then Crown Princess of Italy, had given birth to a son, the population of the sunlit town went wild with exultation. Men greeted each other in the streets with "Italia ha un Re" (Italy has a King), and the shouts reached the Palace of Castelamai standing high above the gulf, where the proud young mother caught the happy strain, while the father, looking out from the marble balconies over the glistening waters, smiled and blessed the glorious day. Thus Victor Emmanuel was pledged to a brilliant future. "We do not want our King to be an artist or a warrior. We simply require him to be intelligent, good, and a true Italian," said the people. King Humbert's goodness was well known and he proved himself an Italian to the last, even on that fatal eve when he refused to listen to the prayers of the Queen when she begged him not to tire himself by presiding at the meeting on returning from which he met his death.

That Victor Emmanuel is as kind, as thoroughly

Italian in heart, word and manners as his father was, many of his subjects seemed to doubt at the opening of his reign, since the Prince had always been very guarded in his speech and ways, and no one appeared to know much about him. Although rumour had reached our Court of the interesting and excellent education he had received, it was with great indifference that we looked forward to his visit to Bucharest. We were accustomed to derive but little benefit from the presence and conversation of Royal visitors. We remembered the many Imperial and Royal Highnesses we had met in Roumania and abroad, who had favoured us only with such languid questions concerning our health, &c., as clearly proved their possession of an unvarying vocabulary whose monotonous phrases they distributed by the way, beginning afresh whenever they found themselves in presence of new acquaintances.

I must allow that I have seen many Court ladies and gentlemen gratified and delighted with the crumbs thrown to them by the supercilious politeness of royalty, but to this standard of Court perfection I have never been able to attain. I have always entertained a profound reverence for monarchy and its representatives, for the Right Divine of the being graced by God and the nation with a crown, as for every member of their families; but these sentiments of loyalty and traditional respect have been shaken when the scanty courtesy of a stiff German *Höchheit* or obscure *Durchlaut* has affected my instinctive

feeling that the duty to show not only politeness, but interest and sympathy, towards all with whom they come in contact should be numbered amongst the dearest attributes of royalty. I am ashamed to say how often I must have astonished those haughty Princes and Princesses who scarcely deign to move lips or eyelids when addressing their inferiors in rank, by casting on them such looks of amused irony or surprise that I received in exchange glances which clearly said, "Impertinent little thing!" I must, however, be sincere and add that it is only the minor potentates who indulge in the pleasure of leaving behind them a row of courtiers thunderstruck at the honour they have received of listening to these low, drawling tones.

The Prince of Naples had not been an hour the guest of our King before all apprehension as to his amiability and sympathy was stilled. He displayed such conversational powers as are rarely found not alone among his equals, but even among those beneath him whose professional task it is to be eloquent. On every subject he seemed well-informed. In order to give her son the benefit of a thorough training in Court etiquette, Queen Margherita had devised the plan of setting up a circle of empty chairs in a large drawing-room. Upon each of these was inscribed the name and title of some personage belonging to the Church or State. She would then make her son, at that time only nine years of age, converse with the empty seats, bearing labels with names such as "Arch-

bishop of Milan," "Minister of Justice," "General G.," "The French Ambassador," &c. In this manner the child quickly learned the different ways in which he ought to address the absent officials and ladies without allowing conversation to slacken or drop for a moment. But beyond this, his erudition in all that regards historical and military matters is really remarkable, while to describe fully his tastes and instincts we should have to recall some of the rulers among his ancestors, those ancient Dukes who, together with the ordinary accomplishments of Princes, had the gift of sagacity bestowed upon them from their cradles.

The years which to many are numbered among the happiest of life, those of early childhood, were spent by the Prince of Naples in labour and study so severe that had not his mother soothed the toil of those early days with her gentleness and affection, he might have become hardened by excess of study and reflection and turned into a solitary bookworm. Fortunately he loved sport, and notwithstanding the efforts he had to make to obtain from his weak body a perfect obedience to his commands, all his impulses urged him to action and violent exercise. He loved to follow his Alpine soldiers along steep paths of mountain and glen, or to run beside the *bersaglieri* regiments at the wild pace which makes them so fascinating to behold. It is almost incredible that a Prince who boasts that he desires nothing better upon earth than days spent among his troops in

glade or forest, should be at the same time the keen observer whose chief pleasure it is to study every one he meets, and to whom no creature upon earth has ever appeared indifferent or uninteresting. It is this keen scrutiny of his fellow men which prevents the Prince from putting forward his own opinions at the beginnings of acquaintance, because he is so much occupied with the minds and feelings of others.

Although he adores riding good horses, running races, and marching alongside of his soldiers as much as he dotes on historical lore, he has escaped the double peril of becoming a mere trooper on the one hand or a gloomy scholar—what the French call a *rat de bibliothèque*—on the other. Either alternative might have ruled in his case, as his tutors have had to deal with a character passionately attracted towards certain ideas and habits. Unlike many Princes who, lacking both energy and intelligence, yet try to imitate the life of great soldiers or to rival learned men, the present King of Italy would have made a brilliant warrior or an accomplished historian had not the balance been ably kept between his tastes and his abilities.

But we must return to the first impression created by his presence in Bucharest, an impression afterwards completed at Rome where I had frequent opportunities of seeing him. It was with almost a shudder of apprehension we had learned that the heir of the Italian throne was to spend three or four

days at our Court, and on glancing over the programme of the entertainments prepared for him we discovered that, owing to the fact that he was in deep mourning, he had expressed a desire that hardly any official receptions should take place. There were therefore to be no gala representations, no races, no balls. We noted that he would pass the afternoons in the company of the Queen in her Majesty's music room or study, where most of our time was spent.

When the Prince of Naples on the day of arrival, after a visit to the barracks and a drive in the Chaussée or public garden of Bucharest, entered the precincts sacred to the arts and poetry, he threw around him a sharp glance of inquiry. His gaze took in at once pictures, furniture and individuals, and seemed to penetrate into the remotest corners of our minds, tearing off the veil that hides thought and sentiments. The eyes, keen and interrogating, travelled from one face to another noting each detail of gesture or smile, yet controlled by a strict politeness and quickly averted if he noticed the slightest uneasiness on the part of the person who was the object of his scrutiny.

"This will not be a tedious week," I said to myself, as the Prince went on bowing and looking round him with all his attention given to this silent observation. Then, all at once, noting a smile of amusement on the Queen's face, he said:

"Your Majesty must find me very singular and

almost rude. I must first take in impressions of faces and landscapes before I can enjoy the simple natural pleasures of conversation, of grasping at people's thoughts through their words. I must first handle my impressions a little before I allow them to take hold upon me and throw a haze of illusion over my imagination. The first thing I do on arriving in a foreign country is to look about and reflect and write down my reflections, so that gradually by accumulating facts in my mind and diary I am becoming a sort of dictionary. I have an excellent memory in which I am sure you would find almost every person, every place I have seen, each in its proper position, in good order and array, bearing a clear notification of its value and beauty."

"And this is an amusement to you?" asked the Queen.

"Scarcely an amusement. It is an absolute necessity to me. I could not do without it, even if I wished to. I have already noted many remarkable traits in your Roumanian peasants on my way from the frontier. What has struck me much more than their costume is the way in which they hold their heads. . . . Yes, they bear their heads high, a thing unusual among people who stoop all day long over agricultural work. But this has a peculiar significance with them. It shows that they belong to a nation long oppressed yet full of courage, whose favourite gesture for generations has been to lift the head while thinking of the oppressor.

interrupting the daily toil with such reflections as 'We shall one day be a free people. We shall be delivered from tyranny and suffering.' And the women, how calm and dignified they are! They remind me of Samaritans gathered round the well of an evening." Then turning abruptly towards me, he said: "Why do you go on writing? . . . I have been watching you for the last ten minutes. Your pen flies on as if there were nothing more important to do than to write just at this moment, when I am here. . . ."

I felt completely taken aback. . . . "Sire, this must leave by the five o'clock mail. Her Majesty has given me permission to write in her room when I am in a great hurry. I have been writing, but I have listened with great interest to every word of your Royal Highness's conversation."

"Things done by halves never succeed; you cannot have listened with real attention, or if you have, your work must have been badly done. Now tell me, have you travelled much? Do you know I was trying to find out where you have been educated, while I spoke to you as you were introduced. . . . Thus far I am sure I am not mistaken; you have not been brought up in Roumania. Now I am going to guess the country and the city where you spent some of your earliest years. Let me see. . . . Every one here speaks French beautifully, German too, but you speak English almost like an Englishwoman, there is not the slightest difference between your English

and your French. And yet. . . . Ah! How stupid of me not to see it immediately. You were brought up in Paris. There is no mistake about that. You need not try to deny it."

"I do not, but may I ask your Royal Highness what reasons led you to form that conclusion, which is a correct one?"

"Of course," answered the Prince triumphantly. "Paris, Paris only could have taught you. . . ."

"What has Paris taught her which makes her French education so conspicuous in her?" questioned the Queen.

"Can your Majesty not guess? She is very young yet, in perfect possession of the conviction, so widespread in France, that woman is on a footing of equality with if not of superiority to man. She has a quiet, authoritative way of giving her opinions, as if feeling absolutely sure that her every word will be taken into consideration. Now in Germany, where man prevails, a woman would speak in tones of humility and feel so much astonished at being consulted that at first she would find no words to answer, even if she were extremely clever or learned."

"In the upper classes, perhaps," answered the Queen. "But I cannot let you ignore the many remarkable women in Germany—how well armed they are with clever arguments and fluent speech."

"Your Majesty misunderstands me. I simply mean the way of putting forth ideas, the security of

mind and tone, that is French. . . . Then the other trait, a very striking one also, you went on writing while we were speaking."

"But your Royal Highness does not mean to say that 'Time is money' is a French proverb or an exclusively Parisian saying?"

"No, but the French prefer ideas to sentiment, and of course you were following up an idea which you were afraid of losing. What were you writing . . . a poem . . . or a prose tale?"

"A letter to my mother."

A tender smile passed over the Prince's features. "And do you write often to her?"

"Every day."

"So do I to the Queen."

"And as my mother will feel very anxious to hear all about your Royal Highness's visit, and I have a good deal of work to do for the Queen, I thought I might try to finish this letter."

"And I have been unkind enough to hinder you. . . . Well, let me atone. . . . Please tell your dear mother you are writing under dictation and write this: 'The Prince of Naples is delighted with Roumania, loves and admires its Queen, and thanks you for having given your daughter such an excellent education (though she is uncivil enough to write to you while I am present), taught her so many languages and inspired her with the same great affection as he has for his own mother.' When I had finished the sentence, the Prince took the pen and traced

these words at the foot of the page, 'Witnessed and signed by me: *Vittorio Emmanuele di Savoia.*'"

"Now all of you take care what you say," said the Prince laughingly when a few minutes later we were gathered round the tea-table. I write down everything, and there is not a word that I do not remember. I am a phonograph. . . . But my diary is locked. It contains portraits which I draw on the flyleaf in order to make physiognomies speak for themselves."

Every time he returned from the sightseeing expeditions to which the King regularly conducted him, the Prince of Naples came to the Queen's sitting-room as one accustomed to be on intimate terms with her Majesty, and continued to give abundant proofs of his intelligent appreciation of the courtesy shown him. The numerous hospitals scattered in and about Bucharest, and their vast proportions, struck the Prince strongly and led him to question us much on the subject.

"Why are there more hospitals in Bucharest than in any other town?"

"Our ancestors built them. . . . Our forefathers were inspired with a mysticism almost as deep and ardent as the faith of the Middle Ages. In order to obtain mercy for their sins they created hospitals and endowed them with immense wealth. These hospitals own many of the greatest estates in the country."

"Oh, the miracles of faith!" answered the Prince. "You should see the pilgrims clustering round the

Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem to understand the power and beauty of faith. You should see the stones there which are always bathed with tears, almost black like the stones upon which rain perpetually falls."

"Yes," I answered. "They are the tears of my brethren of the Orthodox religion, the Russian pilgrims who cross the vast Asiatic desert on foot to reach the tomb of the Saviour. Yes, the Orthodox pilgrims know how to show their love for Him."

"They do not love Him any better than the Catholics," answered the Prince with a flash of indignation. "You are quite mistaken. You speak from hearsay, whereas I have seen. . . . But we must not have a religious dispute on the subject."

"No," interposed the Queen. "Postpone the subject to another time, or I might be tempted to put in a word or two in favour of the Protestants, and discord would reign in this spot where harmony should hold sway. Do you know that the Prince is so kind as to compare my Court to the Court of Ferrara? But will not your Royal Highness return to the Jerusalem journey? What did you feel when you came in sight of the Holy City?"

"An emotion so terrible that it seemed to me that I had not been prepared for it, though I expected much. The culminating point of my voyage was when, at the foot of the mountain where our Lord

preached the sermon of love and contrition, we saw the clouds that hid the summit roll away one by one, recalling to us the veil of the sanctuary that was rent in twain when Jesus Christ died. Thus the clouds divided and we perceived against the clear sky the form of a shepherd standing motionless in an attitude of solemn communion with the elements and God. It seemed to us that the Good Shepherd Himself had come back to the mountain on which His immortal prayer was first uttered, 'Our Father who art in Heaven.' . . ."

We sat silent, awed and touched by the eloquent interpretation of this unique scene, when, passing to another topic, the Prince referred to our soldiers. "Though they belong to the Latin race they look graver than our Italian troopers, our own dear soldiers. I love them, I love them, *come la mia ciele*, like my own skies. Ah, how gay, how brave, how tireless are our *bersaglieri!* They move as swiftly as deer and the tufts on their shoulders dance in the wind. How charming and how unlike all other music are the marches that lead them in their quick race! Shall I whistle and sing them to you?" And to our great delight the Prince began to imitate the sound of fifes and flutes and bugles. Soon all the glamour of Italy crept over us. In a vision, quick as the joyous and warlike cadences, we saw the regiments passing through the Campagna Romana or along the streets of some quaint Italian town. There he stood lifting up his energetic head, the slender,

nervous hands crossed on his knees, singing the songs he loved—the songs through which all the eager movement, the untiring youthful effort that leads modern Italy towards civilisation seemed to roll before our eyes. All the hurried, exultant progress of Italy seemed to stir before us in the person of this young Prince, who would one day hold the sway of the realm in those same restless hands in whose veins ran the blood of Garibaldi's royal friend and comrade — the first Italian King. . . .

"We shall all feel very sad when the Prince of Naples leaves us," said the Queen one day. "Do you know what he did this morning? At dawn, while his aide-de-camp was still asleep, he got up quietly and slipped out, hailed a cab and ordered the driver to take him through the poorest suburbs of the town. When his officers rose and found that the Prince had disappeared, imagine their distress. He has only just returned, a few minutes before breakfast."

At that moment the Prince came into the room. "I can see that your Majesty is relating my morning's excursion, and a very pleasant one it was, too. Now I am well acquainted with every feature of your city. On the way I spoke to several peasants and to a soldier. They all understood me, Roumanian is so like Italian. You could not expect me to content myself, could you, with official accounts and interpretations of this country? The coachman had no

idea who I was, so I could converse freely with him all the time."

That evening one of Molière's plays was performed in the Palace. After the performance the Prince came up to me.

"Molière is a fine fellow," he said. "So genuinely witty and caustic. But I prefer Shakespeare to all the other great geniuses of the world. I know the English language almost as well as my own and love it. No language can express humour and terse irony better. Do you know I often write to my mother in English? When you come to Italy you will hear so much about me that is untrue that I am delighted that you should have seen me abroad."

In this respect the Prince of Naples was mistaken, as I believe that the best experience one can have of a person, more especially if that person happen to be a Prince, is acquired by observing him in his own land; and when, a few years later, I met the Prince suddenly and unexpectedly, I discovered in him many qualities that he had not had an opportunity of displaying in Roumania.

It was on a sultry afternoon. Pisa slept in a haze of mellow light and the grass lay yellow around the Campo Santo and the tall white Cathedral. We had wandered from the Church to the Baptistery, and were about to enter the Campo Santo when a stern official interposed.

"It is impossible to visit the Campo Santo to-day. The Prince of Naples is in Pisa and is coming here.

The Campo Santo is closed to travellers and visitors."

In great distress we remained assembled in a group trying to convince the man that we would not disturb the Prince, that we only wanted to see Oscagna's frescoes, and would move about as softly as mice. He refused even to listen to us, and we were making up our minds to give up all idea of seeing the frescoes, though we could not tell when we might return to Pisa, when all at once I recognised one of the royal aides-de-camp who was coming towards us. I explained our position to him, he gave an order, and in another moment we had entered the forbidden precincts. From tomb to tomb, from inscription to inscription we strolled, keenly alive to the calm glory of the place. The roses were in full bloom on the plot of holy earth brought from Jerusalem, and a soft silence, steeped in the profound drowsiness of the summer air, lay upon the place.

Suddenly the sharp sound of bugles and military music burst upon the ancient, dreamy Campo Santo. The strains of the royal march echoed through the slender marble colonnades. I remembered hearing the Prince of Naples whistle that same national anthem which now ushered him into our view. How unchanged and yet how different he seemed amid that brilliant cortège in the attitude of one now ready to condescend and bestow favours. On recognising us, he bade us follow, and going from tomb to tomb as we had done, he awoke the very

soul of history, here with a quotation, there with a remark, touching with his fine nervous hands the rusty old chains which still bear testimony to the days when Pisa was a port and mirrored her beauty on the bosom of the faithless sea. . . .

For a Prince so accomplished and so singularly original, for a sovereign as learned and wise as he is, disdainful of light pleasures and pursuits, a spouse was needed who would herself bring strength and talents to the royal house.

"I will not marry a doll or a stick. I will not make a match to suit popular desires or general custom, but a marriage that will bring me complete happiness, because if I am happy so will be my parents and the nation. And if I find the wife of my dreams, and if your poetic ideals approve my choice, I wish you to be the first to congratulate me, remember that. . . ."

Thus had the Prince spoken at Bucharest on the March evening that had preceded his departure, and the Queen laughed as I promised. When the Princess of Naples, a radiant bride, came out of the church amid songs and flowers leaning on her husband's arm, and receiving eager congratulations from every side, a friend of mine, a lady whose exalted position made the task easy, stepped forward and congratulated the Prince in my name.

For one instant only he remained confounded, then in a flash he rememberd and answered:

"Yes, my ideal is beautiful; indeed she is quite

right," and with all his heart in his voice he fervently returned his thanks.

I met Queen Elena of Italy in Naples before she became a Queen. My family had been closely associated with the princely family of Montenegro, and long before that Florentine morning her sweet, pensive face had been familiar to me. I had heard about the wild Tchernagora, where she was educated and where she herself gave lessons to her little sisters, and was the joy of her father's house. Therefore, when I gazed at the pallid countenance, the sleepy black eyes whose glances thrilled into life whenever her husband stooped towards her or spoke, as I watched her listening somewhat despondently while in the new Etruscan Museum a professor versed in the mysteries of that ancient race delivered a most interesting speech—it appeared to me that a mystery greater than the spells written in that language whose secret is for ever dead, lay in the slim person of the Tchernagora maiden who had so recently become an Italian Princess, passing from the eagle's nest to a halcyon land.

After the speech was delivered the Princess rose; there was a kind of graceful apathy in her movements which spoke more of Oriental ease than mountain sturdiness, but the moment she opened her lips the energy of her forefathers was to be detected in the luminous orbs of black velvet shining between the dark lashes.

"Oh, is not Florence lovely? I am trying to dis-

cover which Italian town I love most. But directly I stay two or three days in one, I am unfaithful to the one I have just left. Italy is to me an ocean of flowers, pictures, and smiles. But is it not sad that no way can be found to decipher these Etruscan inscriptions? How awful to think that a whole race can thus perish completely!" The Princess shuddered. "In our dear Tchernagora we believe that as long as a song survives the remembrance of a nation cannot be lost—I mean a song of heroism, relating some brave deed. But the Estruscans have left more than a song, they have left statues, urns, arms, records of their customs, the tombs where their kings lie in glistening array, yet to us they are quite dead because not a record from them ever crosses the ages to reach our souls. . . . It really seems true that the human word contains the only real life."

Elena of Italy and Montenegro stood there amidst the remnants of Etruscan civilisation and art. She seemed taller than the other ladies present, and her pale face shone, while through the open windows the Florentine breeze brought the perfume of roses and the murmur of the busy city. All the vigour and promise of Spring quivered through the hall, avoiding the soulless urns and statues to centre round the daughter of the Minstrel Prince, of the Warrior-Singer, Nicholas of Montenegro.

QUEEN MARIA CHRISTINA AND KING ALFONSO XIII. OF SPAIN

As one follows the rocky road that leads to Madrid, through plains desolate and bereft of trees or verdure, leaving far behind one the green softness of the Guipujera provinces and the fairness of Burgos, that weird old city clad in its mantle of foliage, haunted of a moonlit night by the phantom of the national hero, the marvellous warrior, Cid Campeador, a sense of loneliness akin to terror fills the soul. On each side of the railway stretch grey stones and brown earth far as the eye can reach, and the wandering herds, whose slow steps alone disturb the dreary solitude, have difficulty in finding a morsel of grass or wild herb to graze upon. And when through the thick folds of the morning mist the Escurial with its numberless turrets bursts suddenly upon the view, the sight is by no means calculated to relieve the imagination or dispel the mournful impressions created on the way. How black and how menacing a mountain can look only those can realise who have gazed upon the dark slopes and

darker summit that towers above that melancholy palace. Of course, at the very first glance, it is easy to infer that not a single room can exist within that palace whose walls, floor and ceiling are not overshadowed by its high neighbour the Sierra. Indeed, from earliest times the mountain appears to have cherished the impossible ambition of entering the building, and in the meantime cast upon pavement, court and garden signs, as it were, of mute wrath, like the distant aspect of a thundercloud before the storm speaks from within its folds. Notwithstanding all the pains that a modern Spanish monarch (one of the Bourbon dynasty) took to lighten the gloomy atmosphere of the Escurial salons by placing in them gay furniture and tapestry worked in bright and varied colours, the forbidding presence of Philip II. still lurks behind its high wooden doors. It was he who built the palace in one of the few rare moments of cheerfulness and grace known to that grim potentate. On the eve of the Battle of St. Quentin's, in which his troops overcame the French army, he swore that if the Spaniards proved victorious he would build a huge convent dedicated to St. Lawrence, the Saint under whose patronage he had placed the fate of the campaign. Now as St. Lawrence was a martyr, and had been burnt to death on a gridiron, the king tried to give the cloister the appearance of that instrument of torment by building eleven courtyards separated by as many suites of cells and apartments; each of these was to represent one of the

rods of the gridiron, and the courts were meant to symbolise the space between the rods, while the King's own suite of chambers formed the handle.

Almost the whole line of sovereigns belonging to the Austrian dynasty have borne some affinity for this strange abode, where amidst dismal prayers and cruel designs were spent the days of the most illustrious among them, Philip the Second. Into every corner of the land they poured as it were, like an ocean of lead and blood, the dread sensation of their invisible presence. Unseen by the people, who knew only that the King of Spain lived surrounded by an etiquette whose strict laws had changed him from a living human being into a shadow bowed down by his own grandeur, the throne came to be surrounded more by awe than love. Scenes of horror and fear formed around it an atmosphere as funereal and heavy as the odours of the dim *Pudrideiro*, where after death the monarch's corpses were preserved till the slow drops of water falling upon them achieved the work of destruction. These awful images may well typify a race whose last representative, pale, haughty, and worn out by generations of terrible ancestors, appear to be kept from dropping like a faded leaf only by the pride which still survives in their clear and languid blue eyes.

From such memories, well in keeping with the landscape of brown earth and grey stones, from such gruesome associations, does Madrid—lively and beautiful Madrid—rouse the traveller as, dazed by

the din and the sunlight, he rolls through her indolent and crowded streets. Who would think longer of Philip II. or remain pondering over the painful past? Mirth and noise, the bustle of impatient tradesmen, the slim figures of *toreros* in their everyday garb, the rich equipages of the wealthy and the merry laugh of the poor, these express in outward appearance what Madrid means to her happy children, and why they deem their own city fair above every other in the world. At any hour of the day or night, whatever be the season or the weather, the streets are ever full to overflowing, and, carried on by the torrent of wild enjoyment and eager movement, the mind of the calmest, the gravest person retains only the power necessary to ask in a timid *sotto voce* manner: "Who cooks their dinners for them, who looks after the children, the little ones that they are obliged to leave at home?"—for the idea that there can be any one left in the houses seems preposterous. As to the habit in Madrid society of driving to the Castellana every afternoon, it is so inveterate that one day when I had desisted from following the universal example, because I could not tear myself away from a thrilling book, all our friends left cards, feeling sure that one of us must be ill, if not both. There is something touching, in many ways worthy of perfect approval, in the fact that at the hour of the Angelus, with just the same hasty, elastic step, the same buoyant exuberance, the whole population, not an individual excepted, rushes

for a few moments into the ever-open churches to pray.

Over the chaos and turmoil of faces, carriages, screams, chatter, clatter and patter, like a great white bird the Royal Palace spreads its long wings. One is rather bewildered to find it has an air as modern as the furniture in the Escurial, nay, even more up-to-date. And it is needful to remember how unchanged are the traditions still revered behind the massive walls, or one would experience a sense almost of disappointment since the grandeur of the Spanish monarchy seems inseparable from the legends of the Camerera major—the dreaded Court officers and severe Court dames—and the Court of Spain could no longer boast of being the strictest Court in Europe if it did not remain faithful to all its terrible rules. In some details the stern etiquette has had to be modified, as fear of ridicule overcame the dread of losing the lustre which centuries alone can bestow. But to this day the visitor ascending the tall flight of stairs leading to the upper hall is told that after the first ten steps he must take his hat off, and the ladies who accompany him must bow, because from that spot he is supposed to perceive a fold or stray glimmer of one of the three sacred banners which belonged to the three ancient orders of chivalry in Spain. He also learns, if his guide knows anything of the usages of the Court, that all grandees have a right to enter the Palace unbidden and at any hour to ask for an interview with the monarch,

who calls every grandee his cousin; and that no nobleman has the right to bear his titles on succession until the King has given him permission to do so. This takes place only after a very curious and intricate ceremony, at which all the other grandees are present, wearing their traditional robes and huge feathered hats, which they hold in their hands till the King, after having questioned the new Duke or Count as to the origin and merits of his forefathers, tells him to don his headgear, while the grandees gathered around him do the same, and all stand with heads covered in the presence of their sovereign—a privilege very dear to the Spanish nobility.

To atone for the absence of feudal grandeur, the Royal Palace of Madrid abounds in art treasures, reminding one that the Bourbon ancestor of the present King was grandson to the French monarch whose taste for splendour and elegance in his surroundings was so remarkable. That the young Sovereign belongs to the Latin race is quite apparent in the cut of his clear features, the vivacity of his glance, and the eagerness with which he follows the scenes that come under his eyes. Were it not for his thick lips, a characteristic feature in the Hapsbourg family, it would be difficult to remember that his mother is an Austrian archduchess, and calls her son "Bubb" (little boy) exactly as does every other Viennese mother, be she noblewoman or shopkeeper.

The task which lay before the Queen of Spain in

rearing her child was a hard one. From the very moment of his birth the infant came into the world a King, and his first screams were respectfully checked by his nurses with the soft remonstrance "Will your Majesty deign to be quiet?" The Royal mother had to struggle against the wild desire which possessed the Spanish nation to approach their Sovereign, and yet try to make the baby understand how dear he was to them. She insisted in keeping him away as much as possible from the places and pursuits that would recall his rank to him; she wished his childhood to be as happy as that of any ordinary mortal, and yet she might not lose sight of the necessity of teaching him the privileges and duties of a Sovereign.

Books on almost every subject the human mind can refer to have been written, but a really useful, comprehensive book dealing with the education it would be fitting to bestow on a Prince does not exist, nor will it ever be written, since cases must always vary according to race and climate. For instance, the Austrian Empire needs a ruler taciturn, courteous, and grave, who shows himself to his subjects on rare occasions, and with a few simple words will thread his way through all the conflicts astir in the different countries gathered under his sceptre. An Emperor of Russia must appear strong as iron, speak in tones of absolute self-control and self-reliance, and never seem to ask for advice. Somewhat mystical and melancholy, the King of the

young Italian realm should love eloquence, travelling, Parliamentary discussions, and be ever on the move, like the ideals of the fair land which stands between the two seas. King Edward VII. gives us the example of a true British Monarch, and acts well up to the standard required to make him take a high place in the history of his country.

The demands of the Spaniards as to what they expect their King to be and do for them are numerous and varied as they are difficult to define. King Alfonso XII., the father of the present King, seems to have satisfied them in many ways, and in speaking of the deceased Monarch they always say: "He was not only a perfect Spaniard but a perfect King of Spain"—though why and how he should have succeeded in obtaining this double title at once they themselves would perhaps be embarrassed to explain. This much I have been able to infer: that a real Spaniard must be lively, love bullfights, *tressilio*, and his pride, spend money lavishly, be familiar with the haughty and haughty with the familiar; and that a King of Spain has to imitate a real Spaniard in order to become a perfect King. Yet in this very imitation lies the danger he incurs, because, while he is exactly like all other Spaniards around him, he might forget, or allow them to forget, that he is King; if the temptation took hold of him to remind them of the fact, he would instantly lose the above-mentioned qualities. Now it appears that King Alfonso XII. could with wonderful success

play both parts in turn, or even in the same moment, and his son is expected to resemble him. His Austrian mother had many a time to fight with her own instincts and the principles dearest to her heart when she felt this desire of the nation rise behind her child's footsteps to urge him on. But the young King of Spain is a real Spaniard, and every inch a real King. A few touches of Hapsbourg dignity blend with the Bourbon grace and render his slight figure and youthful face attractive, although he cannot truthfully be called handsome.

Traces of the enormous wealth and luxury of the ancient Kings of Spain are to be found in the long range of Royal stables, where one may spend many interesting hours. Besides the great number of gala carriages panelled with ivory, ebony and gold, or painted by the greatest artists of their time, the horses, of high pedigree and quick blood, belonging to the King, the Queen Mother and the Infantas, attract our admiration ; while stablemen and grooms in bright liveries stand like statues before each stall, keeping watch over the noble animals and ready at an instant's notice to saddle the hunter or cob under their charge. A hall vast as that of a museum is full of harness of all sorts, old and new, to be used either on ordinary occasions or for pageants. Here we saw the bright red lace and blue fringe which adorned the mules dear to poor young Queen Mercedes, and her small saddles reminded us how the beautiful Princess loved to gallop at full speed under

the shadow of the trees in the Royal parks. She died on the morning of her eighteenth birthday, and the roar of the cannons intended to salute the joyful anniversary echoed round the Palace where she lay in state, with the delicate bloom that settles on the face of those who go down to an early grave.

But however unhappy the fate of Queen Mercedes may have been, no heroine in the history of Spain, except Ximena, appeals so strongly to the imagination as Juana la Loca, Mad Queen Joan, mother of the Emperor Charles V., who was married to Philip the Fair, so called from his handsome face and graceful bearing. He was chivalrous, kind and brave, and Juana adored her husband. When she saw the pallor of his last hour settle on his countenance, when she found that no fond embrace could warm his chilly hands, she lost her reason. Her grief vanished and her senses became steeped in delusions. Sinking on her knees before her husband's corpse she began screaming with all her might, uttering in turn words of endearment and menace. "Wake, wake! My noble Lord, my spouse, my King! Who dares to say thou art dead? Thy falcon and palfrey await thee in the court below, while menials loiter here and trouble me with trifling tales. Thou canst not die. How should Death dare to touch thy forehead, thy golden hair, thy hand whose strength can lift the heaviest sword, thy breast that never yet quailed beneath the weight of heavy armour? Wake, and we will send

to dark dungeons those who dare to speak such dreadful words. Am I not thy Queen, mistress of this Palace and this land? Should I have permitted Death to enter my dominions and take thee from me, my King?"

For days she repeated these wild words while her ladies and courtiers entreated her to believe the truth. At last she consented to have the corpse laid in a coffin and travelled with it by her side, from palace to palace, from cloister to cloister, without allowing it to be buried. Sometimes she would stop the long train of knights and dames and then the coffin would be taken down and Queen Joan would stand beside it in the dusty road expecting the dead to awaken. The wind blew her raven hair around her face and the sun scorched her delicate skin, but nothing awoke her from her dream. One day her people in pity took advantage of a deep torpor into which she had fallen to carry off the coffin and deposit it in its tomb; when the Queen awoke she did not miss it but went on imagining her husband lay beside her in the great black coach she had ordered to be made for herself. Black leather cushions deck the interior, and even the window panes are sprinkled with black spots, so that it recalls the famous chariot in which Pluto stole away Persephone while she was gathering the first spring flowers with her companions. This fantastic carriage of Juana la Loca is still to be seen in Madrid, and Queen Maria Christina and King

Alphonse were surprised to hear that I longed to mount up into the funereal vehicle if only for a moment.

"I do not care even to think of it," said Maria Christina," though of course I am not greatly interested in Queen Joan."

Aranjuez, like the other Royal Palaces of Spain, is devoid of historical interest, because the old furniture and tapestries have been set aside in favour of light coloured hangings. The place is but a pale and feeble imitation of Versailles. The garden, tended with special care, reminded me at every step of those avenues and shrubberies where Louis XIV. strolled with his courtiers, whereas I had hoped to find traces of the times of Don Carlos who, according to Schiller's tragedy, is supposed to have loved Aranjuez, or seen in it the summer residence of Philip II., which was deemed a place of such enchantment. It is here that the memory of Queen Mercedes is most vivid, since it was from that Palace that she went forth a happy bride, wearing those robes of purity and light which no woman dons twice in her lifetime. But the future must thrust aside the past, and even the sunlit memory of the Queen-Bride fades before the fact that in the large drawing-room overlooking the Tagus was placed the cradle of King Alphonse III. when he first came to Aranjuez. Here the infant monarch loved to lie and listen to the rush of the river. When at the age of three he eagerly inquired where

the impetuous torrent went to in such a hurry, and received the answer that the Tagus wanted to get out of Spain and grow big in another land, the child cried bitterly, asking again and again if no one could prevail upon the river to stay and grow big in Spain. On this occasion his nurse, perhaps unwittingly, made him the same answer as that which Victor Hugo caused the *duena* to give to an infanta: "Everything on earth belongs to Princes, except the wind"—though this time it was the water that failed to respond to his demand.

I had spent two months in Madrid and had only seen the Royal Family in places of public resort such as the Castellana, the Casa di Campo or Royal Park, and at the Opera. Once indeed I saw the Queen and her son watching with deep interest a national game called *pelota*, an open-air exercise very popular in the northern provinces of Spain; but though I tried to catch as much of their features and expression as possible, all I had been able to gather was that the young King was the merriest boy of his age I had ever seen, and that his mother's pathetic face became young and happy again when she answered some saying of his by a smile. Very amusing remarks they seemed to be to judge from the laughter going on in the royal box, and once or twice the Queen put her handkerchief over her mouth to stifle her hilarity, while the King plucked desperately at his gloved fingers and assumed an air of portentous seriousness while his mischievous eyes danced.

We were about to leave Madrid on account of the approach of the summer season, but the friends with whom we were staying, who represented their King at the Court of Spain, could not take their annual holiday without first calling upon the Queen, a duty which they knew was as irksome to her Majesty as to themselves, but which, nevertheless, had to be performed. We had settled that our departure should take place the day following that fixed on by the Queen, in announcing that she would receive them in the afternoon. We did not expect them to have anything very thrilling or new to report, as we had already heard from them every detail concerning the Court. Yet, when they returned from the Palace, they seemed greatly excited.

"The Queen, like us, is leaving to-morrow. Her Majesty wishes to see *you*, Helène. She cannot let you leave Spain without having been at the Palace. She loves your poems, and is rather astonished that you have never asked for the favour of an introduction, as she would have granted it immediately. She is so curious, and asked us *so* many questions about your appearance and ideas. I assured her Majesty you would be delighted to stop twenty-four hours in St. Sebastian if you were invited to Miramar, and said you would follow the Royal party, as you are rather anxious to return to Roumania without delay. This will also give you an opportunity of seeing Miramar."

Two days afterwards we arrived at St. Sebastian by

the morning train, and, according to the instructions we had received, at once sent a messenger to Miramar, begging the lady-in-waiting to apprise the Queen that my mother and myself were awaiting her Majesty's commands. A young attaché on the staff of the Spanish Foreign Office brought us the answer that it was her Majesty's pleasure to receive us that same day at three o'clock. We had not an instant to lose, so ordering a carriage we drove to Miramar. The place seemed to us at first devoid of all royal pomp or solemnity, and a charming atmosphere of peace pervaded the wainscoted hall, while the drawing-room into which we were ushered looked straight upon the sunlit sea, whose soft summer tints seemed to be reflected from the light hued walls and furniture. We had not much leisure to look round us, as the equerry in waiting announced that her Majesty was waiting to receive us. We followed him through a small door, and the Queen Regent of Spain, for such was her title at that moment, stood before us. I was startled to find her so slim and tall, while her resemblance to the Austrian Archduchess struck me so forcibly that I jumped to the conclusion our visit would prove a very tame affair, interesting only because the personage who admitted us to her presence was a queen.

Before, however, I could reach one of the low chairs to which her Majesty pointed with open fan, I found myself obliged to change my opinion, and muster all my faculties in the course of an interview in which I

felt it would require some exertion on my part to appear with advantage. The Queen, with firm and easy grasp, had directed the conversation into channels likely to reveal the trend of our personal feelings, and events likely to prove of interest to her. She began, as is usual with sovereigns when talking to foreigners, by praising our country, and saying how greatly she appreciated Carmen Sylva's talents as a poet, and her virtues as a woman and queen. The manner in which she discussed both subjects displayed such an inner knowledge of Roumania as well as of the life and works of our Queen, that I held my breath from sheer astonishment, and could scarcely refrain from asking, "But where did your Majesty obtain so much information?"

Then passing to other topics, the Queen displayed the same accuracy of knowledge, the same grasp of people, laws, and events which I had till then regarded as out of the range of royal or feminine interest. Gentle movements of the head and hands accompanied each observation, and when she questioned, with soft, gay voice and merry brown eyes, there was a kind of eager, childish expectation on her face, marked though it was with furrows traced by tears.

"You cannot imagine how often or how much I have wept in my life, nor how lonely I used to feel when my children were too little to be companions to me. But as they began to play I used to play with them too, and would frolic with them for hours, and thus gather courage and a clear head for the Cabinet

Councils at which I had to preside. I had such a happy youth, and I tried to recall the memory of those days, till gradually my mind became like a rainbow which smiles between two storms till, smothered by clouds, it disappears only to reappear once more. It is made up of sunlight and tears like my soul. . . . Don't you love St. Sebastian, though you can have been here only a few hours? It is a sweet place, and the sea does the children a world of good. As to Alfonso, I feel sure that if he were not a king he would have been a sailor, and come ashore only for the *corridas* (big bull-fights) and *pelotas*. Yet he adores riding, and when he was quite little he would make regular scenes when the time arrived to alight from his horse. I used to be quite ashamed of him! . . . I am so disappointed that you cannot stay one day longer here—are you really sure you cannot?—I had invited Pierre Loti to lunch with you here at Miramar. He is our neighbour and lives at Hendaye. He is *so* kind and true and such a genius. I call his descriptions of Brittany and of the Basque provinces quite remarkable. He moves me even more than Chateaubriand, whom I used to adore before I read Loti's works. And then what a refined and gentle character he has. I feel perfect trust in him and look up to him, his quiet manner, his unobtrusive ways are such a contrast to his ardent soul, ever turned towards thoughts of death and immortality."

The Queen cast a long, lingering glance over the

bright sea, whose subdued murmur crept in between her words, then she resumed.

"I am keeping you a very long time, and I do not ask you whether you have anything else or anything better to do, though I suppose Heaven knows when you will return to Spain. You are young, yet what a number of people you have seen whom I love and admire and shall never meet again—many, too, whom I have never met or seen only once in my life. For instance, Queen Victoria and the Princess of Wales. Tell me what they are like now—describe your visit to England, and your stay at Balmoral. You cannot understand what a treat this is to me. Of course I hear from other Sovereigns through official despatches and through their ambassadors, but one can seldom obtain personal details. . . . Now, I suppose you want to see my children. They will be back from the shore in ten minutes. . . . Am I very different from what you imagined me to be? You see I am short-sighted, and short-sighted people look ten times more cold and disagreeable than they are in reality. It is such a nuisance, such a drawback to be short-sighted—I notice that you, too, wear eye-glasses."

"Yes, Madame, I am almost blind, though my eyes are excellent when I look closely at an object, but I cannot distinguish things, or faces, or landscapes even at a short distance. But I do not consider this defect as a calamity, and fail to share your Majesty's opinion."

"Why?"

"Because my short sight has spared me many a disagreeable impression, a cross mien, a look bent in harshness or anger upon me. I am thus enabled to ignore most of the ugly sides of life, and with the help of a strong imagination and a cheerful disposition I always keep in view the illusion that the earth holds only beauty and grace."

At this juncture, just as the Queen was about to reply, the doors were thrown open, an usher announced "the King," and the Infantas entered, dressed in stiff white frocks, their charming young faces tanned by the sea-breezes. The King followed close behind. Rushing forward and putting his sisters aside, he almost dashed into his mother's chair, but all at once, becoming aware of our presence, he put on an air of dignity which I could not have believed so young a boy capable of assuming. With outstretched hands he advanced towards us.

"I have often seen you. Do you like Spain? Which do you prefer, the bull-fights, the *pelota*, or a military display? I don't know which of these delightful things stands nearest my heart. A review, I suppose."

He talked with a fluent amiability while the Infantas listened to the Queen's explanation of my theory concerning the benefits of short sight. They laughed, and at that moment the family group formed a picture of such perfect harmony and bliss that I said to the Queen: "I am so pleased to have seen your Majesty thus standing in the sunshine before

the sparkling sea, with the rays of her life around her."

The Queen's brown eyes filled with tears, while a rainbow-like smile played on her lips. "When will you come to Spain again? And you are leaving this evening."

"This evening?" said the King. "Mamma, I will not allow them to cross our frontiers," he added in his gay, defiant voice. His eyes shone at that moment like those of his Austrian mother, but there was so much Spanish grace and Spanish chivalry in the bearing of his lithe, supple figure that I murmured: "A real Spaniard indeed, and a real King of Spain."

WILHELMINA I. QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS

THERE is something attractive and rather pathetic about the fate of this young Queen, destined from the very hour of her birth to embody the most fervent wish of her nation, when that nation had little expected the boon of possessing a direct heir or heiress to the dynasty. Long before the author of Cyrano de Bergerac called her "The little lily Queen who reigns over the Kingdom of Tulips," she was to the inhabitants of the Netherlands a precious treasure; poets sang and fairies wooed her long before the days when she became a smiling, girlish bride, whose hands unlocked themselves from a bridegroom's clasp in order to beg for mercy and peace, who stood watching with anxious eyes for the olive branch wafted across the seas from the land where the rush and din of battle waged.

It is well known that after the death of his first wife and of his son, Queen Wilhelmina's father seemed to have abandoned all ideas of a second marriage, and his subjects mourned to think that

the throne of Holland would find no successor in the direct line. Queen Sophia, born Princess of Wurtemberg, was a very amiable, learned, and even somewhat pedantic Princess. Her chief enjoyment lay in reading and travelling about from place to place within her Kingdom, poring over all the old volumes she could find in public libraries. Sometimes she would escape from the solemnity of Court etiquette, and go to spend a few quiet months in Paris, where she lived the existence of a wealthy *bourgeoise*, insisting that no homage whatever should be paid to her, entering into the views of the clever people with whom she associated, and always being foremost when a great literary discussion was astir. Her dearest ambition was to gain a place among the distinguished women whose *bons mots* still found worshippers after their death; and when some well-informed courtier or friend would compare her with Madame de Stael, Madame du Deffant or Madame Geoffrin, she thought but little of all the privileges conferred by rank. Her husband approved of his wife's tastes—he was himself a very intellectual Prince, and had learnt the art of dramatic elocution from the celebrated French actor *Talma*. When he received a Royal visitor or a member of his family at the Palace, the King was unable to conceive any greater attention to bestow on his guest than the favour of hearing some famous piece of French tragedy uttered by the Royal lips. As age came on, bringing the loss of teeth, the shrill tones exacted by

comical or pathetic scenes would rise to a howl, the King's eyes would roll furiously; and a Royal personage who had been favoured with a representation told me how severe the ordeal proved because it was so difficult on these occasions to forbear from laughing, which the King would never have forgiven. At the end of the recitations he would add: "*Povvero* Talma! *He* always said to me that had I not been born a Prince, I would have proved his most dangerous rival." To the last year of his life the late King of Holland kept up his love of tragedy, and often the courtiers who, trembling, heard him scream aloud through the vast saloons of his palace were delighted to find that instead of the Royal admonitions they feared to hear, he was merely hurling at them Corneille's famous "Qu'il mourut," or the story of Hippolyte's last day. . . .

Mirth and hope at his Court had died away on the death of the King's last son. The nation looked forward only to a continuation of these gloomy days till their monarch in his turn should go and join his Queen and his children in the Royal vault at Delft. It is therefore easy to imagine with what joy the news of a second marriage was hailed, although the prospect seemed unlikely that the Royal circle might regain its former brightness and confer happiness again upon the land.

The deep attachment that the Hollander race has ever shown to the dynasty of its rulers is one of the most admirable traits of their national character, and

is something quite apart from the loyalty extant in many other countries. In Holland the sentiment is more one of honoured affection than of reverence; in each member of the Orange-Nassau family the people have recognised their favourite hero, onward from the Saviour of the Netherlands, the Blest Conqueror, their own William, as they even now call him, heedless that he has for some centuries been laid in his tomb. The love they bestow upon those who still bear his valorous blood in their veins is an eternal thanksgiving for what the illustrious *stadtholder* achieved.

It mattered little whether the King's expected child should be a son or a daughter; the dynasty was about to resume its unchecked career; another descendant of the great William of Orange was coming to claim the devotion of thousands. Thus it was that Wilhelmina tasted the cup of popularity with the very first drop of milk which trembled on her infant lips. "All the fairies are attending her cradle; she is going to receive the most beautiful presents the fairies can bestow," cried the enthusiastic voice of the multitude, but another voice, firm and low, seemed to answer: "She needs not the presents of fairies; her people will pray for her welfare and these prayers must prove better than fairy gifts and praise." These words, full of wisdom and tenderness, were uttered by one whose name will ever remain associated with Wilhelmina's dazzling fate, by a princess, young and fair, the Royal infant's mother,

who, herself still almost a child, was delighted and awed when the Court called her, "Our Queen," and whose rosy cheek became a hue redder when they said: "Your Majesty!" in answer to her slightest question.

Emma, Princess of Waldeck-Pyrmont, had been brought up in one of those dear old German castles where imagination can feel sure of meeting the ghosts of loreleis or knights, and of hearing ballads sung at midnight under the moon as it pours through the windows and bastioned towers. The pretty Princess dreamt neither of foreign lands nor thrones; she enjoyed her life, almost rustic in its simplicity, yet highly aristocratic in the way of breeding; she learnt to use the distaff and the spindle, to paint beautiful pictures on the margin of manuscripts and prayer-books, to worship God's children in every creature unfortunate or poor that she met around the castle's gates or in the park. Such was the bride that the aged King of Holland had chosen for himself among all the Princesses who would willingly have accepted the offer of being his Queen. Princess Emma was only nineteen at the time she heard the King's proposal from her mother's mouth. . . . She cried bitterly . . .

"And do you want me to accept him . . . do you order me to do so?" . . .

"No, no, dear, dear child, that is left completely to your own choice, only the King is lonely and unhappy. . . ."

"Unhappy? . . ." and the sobbing face became lovelier than usual, illumined by a smile of compassion and sudden interest. When she had heard the whole tale, she said: "I will go to him and to them" —meaning her future subjects. "And I will do my duty to them all, so help me God!"

How well the fair Princess kept her promise is now clear to all eyes. She soon stood high in the favour of her husband and of all the nation, who looked up to her and admired her gentle visage, but her demeanour remained as modest and quiet as before her marriage. And she proved the best mother that Wilhelmina's best friends could have asked Providence to endow her with. Queen Emma's task was by no means an easy one. The child was petted by her father, and adored by all who approached her; the nation idolised the heiress to the throne, and universal approval smiled upon her every movement, her every step. The King forbade his wife to thwart the little girl's early caprices; and Wilhelmina seemed to have inherited from her glorious ancestors no small portion of their energy and natural wilfulness, which she was always ready to show off, since every trait of the Orange temperament exhibited by the young Princess drew forth outbursts of enthusiasm, genuine though imprudent. Her defects were as much praised as her qualities, because they represented all the splendid vitality of her race.

Against these defects Queen Emma did not

endeavour to wage open war. She interfered very little, even when one of the child's whims was instantly complied with by her father, but her presence, silent and grave, sometimes weighed with the sensitiveness of Wilhelmina's conscience more heavily than the hardest rebuke. The rash girl would turn from the eyes that looked tenderly upon her to read nothing but disapproval and regret in her mother's looks, and would burst into tears, saying: "I am naughty, mamma says so with her eyes!" No one can well imagine or recount how moving and arduous was this mute interference, how much Queen Emma had to thank her own severe training for having given her habits of discipline and fortitude. An anecdote, among many others that I know, will prove to what extent her ability was put forth to help her child and save her from the snares that render a spoilt girl harmful to herself and others, the more so if that girl be destined to become a ruler of men.

Wilhelmina is endowed with the gift of observation—nothing escapes her quick eye. But the ready tact which is an instinct prominent in Royal blood often prevented her from giving utterance to the result of her vivid impressions. The Queen well knew when this quality was at work in the young soul, because then Wilhelmina proved restless and feverish—seemed to struggle with the desire of speaking and the fear of doing something against her own opinion of good behaviour. One day she brusquely asked the Queen: "Mamma, tell me how

old are you?" The Queen, who had at that time scarcely reached her thirtieth year, complied with the request; she then saw Wilhelmina walk rapidly to and fro and make some very serious calculation on the tip of her fingers. "How old is papa, mother?" "Over seventy." "Poor papa! But, mother, how happy he must feel to have such a pretty young wife as you are, and such a little girl as I am! And how I thank you for loving and tending papa, although he is old. To me papa is young and handsome, but may-be he really looks old to others and even to you." "Oh! do not repeat this conversation to your father, darling. You see now that I never scold you in his presence, because old people do not know when little girls are naughty, and should he discover me to be displeased with you, he would become older still. . . ." "Would he? Oh! how dreadful! Then, mamma, do go on hiding all about me from him. I will try not to be naughty, but when I cannot help myself, be prudent, mamma. Only think, he is over seventy already. . . ."

And from that day, when Wilhelmina was encouraged by the King in her petty freaks, she would turn an imploring eye upon the Queen, and, winking with a knowing air, put her tiny fingers upon her mouth.

Still the habit of command took complete hold of her nature, and Queen Emma resolutely turned over another leaf in the book of practical education to be given to a future Queen. She determined to keep

the pure, tumultuous soul aloof from the abundance of temptations that enveloped its dawn, to guard the true heart against the adulation and applause aroused by the child's slightest action. Such indulgence would in the long run mar the inward harmony, turn aside the current of serious thought, and render Wilhelmina a danger to those who most relied upon her. And she found a judicious if strange means of effecting this. Instead of trying to deprive her of any of the joys she coveted, the Queen allowed her daughter to wear jewels, costly dresses, pearls, and gaudy costumes like any grown-up lady; to indulge in all the greedy wishes of childhood; to see piles of toys heaped up in her nursery; to run about with her dogs as much as she pleased, till Wilhelmina slowly got tired of all that wealth could give. Such things she came to understand would always be hers. She thrust the jewels and the toys aside; she disdained dress and costly array; she sought what every craving creature, every noble-minded nature is athirst after; she looked into the souls and lives of those surrounded her. Pomp and luxury became vain words in her ears; she knew that she would have to put up with them all her life, but they no longer played any active part in her existence. To some of her relatives, who raised their eyebrows when they saw Princess Wilhelmina wearing a heavy necklace of jewels worth the ransom of a rajah, the Queen replied:

"She must get accustomed to these jewels, so

that she may try to discover others more precious in her own soul. I do not want her when she is grown up to pounce with avidity upon all the beautiful objects of luxury she can get so easily. I want her then to be free from what other girls dream about, because her dreaming will be of more importance than the common dreams of girlhood. . . . Then Wilhelmina will love her duty because the austere side of life will prove more attractive to one who has learned to grasp at the real meaning of human efforts and aims."

Notwithstanding all her mother's efforts, the child's strong will still manifested itself on many occasions; the little Princess could not lose entire consciousness of her rank and her rights. Any attempt to veil her personality under the disguise of an incognita enraged her, and she thought this habit, current with sovereigns, to be a kind of humiliation, and a dreadful blow given to truth. Wilhelmina hates falsehood in words as well as in action. The necessity or convenience of travelling incognita she failed to comprehend.

At nine years of age, during her sojourn with her maternal aunt, the old Princess of Wied, Queen Emma sent the young heiress to the Hollander throne on a few hours' trip with a little cousin and their respective governesses. Deeming official pomp inadvisable in the circumstances, she told the ladies who accompanied the children to travel exactly like all the tourists they should meet on the banks of

the Rhine, and not to betray the real quality of the small personages under their charge. "If the people were to know my daughter," said the Queen, "your journey would be spoiled, and, besides, we should have to order special trains, lose a good deal of time, and you could not be back before late evening. So be very careful, and do not allow Wilhelmina to enter into conversation with any one—she would immediately say who she is. . . ."

The ladies promised to obey, and at the beginning of the excursion all went off very well. The little Princesses enjoyed themselves immensely, and as the party numbered several persons they contrived to have a carriage to themselves till they reached a small station where they had to alight and wait for another train. This incident, and the necessity of awaiting on the platform the arrival of a train, which was completely new to her, puzzled Wilhelmina immensely. Some suspicion of the truth began to dawn upon her. She had never in her life left a carriage before arriving at her destination, where she would be greeted by hundreds of eager faces. But now——! She poured angry questions on the ladies who accompanied them. "What is amiss, is there an accident?" Her *gouvernante* felt embarrassed. "No, Princess—only the train is rather late, I am sorry to say. . . .". But she had not time to finish her sentence. Quick as lightning Wilhelmina had darted to the spot where the station-master stood, and addressing him in sharp, peremptory tones, said:

"I am afraid, sir, that you are negligent in your service. I am much displeased, and I am not accustomed to wait. If it is thus when I am one of the travellers on this line, how much must others have to complain! Please take care that this does not happen another time."

The station-master stood aghast. There was something so peremptory, so dignified, so self-confident in the tones of the little girl that he instinctively took off his hat. "I am the Princess of the Netherlands, sole heiress to the throne," added the child with a proud toss of her fair head. "But I forgive you," and she gave the bewildered man her hand to kiss, while the ladies who had from afar watched the scene, rushed up, though feeling themselves unable to thwart her.

When the train dashed into the station, Wilhelmina with royal demeanour stepped into a carriage, and the incident having been related on all sides, she was respectfully cheered and saluted by the crowd while she stood at the window graciously waving her handkerchief to them. The rest of the journey became a real royal progress. "Do not be angry with me, mamma," said Wilhelmina when Queen Emma, hearing all about her daughter's rash conduct, was inclined to chide. "You see we must not cheat those who meet us out of the pleasure they derive from the mere fact of winning smiles and nods from us. If we cannot do more for them we can at least bestow our presence upon them. I am sure

that station-master and all the tourists are happy because I spoke to them or saluted them, whereas had I been completely obedient what would they remember now of the little girl who took a trip on the banks of the Rhine ! . . . ."

The death of the King proved a great blow to the maturing nature of his much loved little girl. My father, who had the honour of representing his Sovereign at the royal funeral, often recalls how when paying his official visit to kind and gentle Queen Emma, he was moved by the woe-stricken face and red eyes of the new little Queen as he met her young Majesty in one of the halls of the Palace.

Queen Emma was then in the prime of womanhood and honoured by all for her wisdom and graciousness. To me her features are familiar, as well as her heart, and I have always heard her praised in our home, because we learned to know, during our parents' stay in Holland, all the beautiful qualities of a firm, straightforward nature. While her mother was daily learning to unravel the mysteries of a statesman's duty, little Queen Wilhelmina became more and more absorbed in her lessons ; she worked hard from dawn to twilight, and as she already spoke French, German, and English fluently, she was taught the history of all these nations in their own language. The philosophy of history was the branch of study that Queen Emma was most anxious her young daughter should know, and they often discussed together the thrilling incidents and characters whose

appearance mid the pages of her school-room books made the Princess's cheeks glow and her eyes shine. On these occasions Queen Emma always found means to illustrate the past with examples from the present, and then very subtly she would initiate the future Sovereign of the realm into the secrets of modern diplomacy and the laws and constitution of her country. In this special study Queen Wilhelmina also had many professors, who at first felt quite embarrassed in talking of such serious matters to a mere child; but they soon understood that the little girl had been reared in an atmosphere of serious thought and labour, and noted how rapidly she followed them through the intricacies of their science.

Her subjects were well aware that their beloved little Queen was toiling hard in order to be able to rule them one day with care and ability, but it always brought them a joyful relief to see her sauntering gaily through the streets of The Hague by the side of her English governess, Miss Winter. When Miss Winter first took her pupil under her guidance (Miss Winter enjoyed Queen Emma's full confidence, justified it, and to this day is treated like a friend by both the Queens) she had great hesitation as to the title by which she should call her Royal pupil. A too ceremonious title was completely out of the question, and on the other side Miss Winter declared she might feel awkward or discourteous were she obliged to call the Queen by her name. Wilhelmina herself found a solution to the prob-

lem. "Call me *darling*," said she, "and I hope to deserve the name."

Every one knows how proudly the Hollander nation watched the childish Queen bloom into charming girlhood till that day, blessed among all days, when she took the solemn oath to be a good Queen to them. "I have prayed two nights and two days before my coronation," said Wilhelmina, "I hope God will help me. I have not asked from Heaven anything for myself. I have asked the Almighty to send happiness to my people through me." In such a chastened spirit she approached the holy table and stretched out her little hand across the big Bible, with a clear, distinct voice pronouncing the sacred vow.

Court etiquette is very severe in Holland, and Queen Wilhelmina desires that it should be maintained thus. She holds that the democratisation of monarchy only can prevail when sovereigns open their souls to new ideas and not their Courts to new customs, and though she leads a very quiet private life, pomp and ceremony are never forgotten when the moment comes for her to appear in public. She often says that to respect traditions is an indirect but true manner of honouring the dead who have created them through centuries of toil and labour.

"I wish I could make a love-marriage," said she to her mother when approached on this subject, to which her own thoughts had never before reverted. "Although I have already made a love-match—I

mean my deep union with my people—I should like to marry a young Prince, like the princes of ballads and fairy tales."

"Life is neither a ballad nor a fairy tale," answered her mother. "But you will be allowed to choose, and if your choice is a good one——"

Prince Henry of Mecklenburg-Schwerin is a distant relative of the young Queen's relatives, and the two had often met. Wilhelmina's heart, perhaps unwittingly, already clung to his image, and it was his name she pronounced first when asked to speak out her desires. As in Queen Victoria's case, Wilhelmina had to act in an open and independent way, but she knew well the nation would approve her decision, because they had placed all their confidence in her. So the news of her betrothal was hailed in every Hollander home as if the daughter of each family had become a bride, and every one talked of her happy look when she went to meet her future husband on the day of his arrival and of his tender gaze as it settled on the bashful young Queen. "May her hearth be a happy one, may little children soon gather round her knees." This was the wish uttered by every tongue on the brilliant wedding-day when the gentle wife took the place of the radiant Queen.

Queen Wilhelmina is middle-sized, and very graceful in gait and demeanour, though somewhat inclined to grow stout. Hers is a very childish face, where the big, deep blue eyes alone denote serious

reflection and inward strength. Her conversational powers are excellent, though she cannot be called a great talker. But she knows how to draw people out, and without questioning she has the knack of learning all she wants to know. One sees that she struggles hard to keep her dignity above the genuineness of her nature and to prevent her young soul from over-leaping the limits assigned to the amiability of a Queen. She is well read in English literature and loves America, as she feels for that mighty Republic a sentiment of curiosity mingled with admiration. "American girls are so pretty and they look so feminine that, were ultra-femininism to invade all the world, the grace and power of our sex would be saved by them."

She was quite charmed with Kruger because he did not look awed by the mere fact of approaching a Queen, as most people generally are, thus making the poor Queens and Princesses much more uncomfortable than their interviewers. She likes to receive as many people as possible and then to recount their conversation and describe their looks to her husband, asking him to do the same thing in his turn, as they generally give their audiences apart, then meet and take tea together before going out for a daily drive in state. Queen Wilhelmina is not in any degree sentimental; her every word betrays perfect insight into events and facts as they are, and her most strenuous efforts are made towards acquiring a hold over the imaginative qualities which so often become

defects in women compelled to act a leading part in politics and society.

She prefers nature to art and loves a gorgeous landscape much better than the rare and valuable pictures she possesses, on account of which the Royal Palace in The Hague might well be called a museum. In that palace she suffers nothing to be changed; even when a chair is moved from its right palace her eye is afflicted, whereas in her own apartment much apparent disorder seems to reign, a disorder which, as Boileau says, is "un effet de l'art." Her love for her native country is so strong that when travelling in Italy, and later in the South of France, she would never fully allow that the scenery she saw was beautiful unless she had said beforehand: "Excepting Holland, this place is one of the prettiest I have gazed upon," and when away from home she pined after The Hague, Scheveningen, and Het Loo.

In every way does Queen Wilhelmina deserve the love of her devoted subjects. She is like the flower of their soil and their history, like the very emblem of a loyal and valiant country; a gentle face wherein good spirits and excellent health combine to make a sweet physiognomy; she is a Queen, strong yet gentle, as all reigning Queens should be. The distance is immense which separates a Queen Consort from a Queen in her own right: Wilhelmina is the real type of what a reigning Queen should be. She is in many points very different from Queen Victoria,

nor does she dream of taking the great Queen as a model, because, as a strong-willed Princess, she loves to tread a path all her own, and she cares only to represent her own race and her own people.

She is not—and now I must again refer to Rostand —"a lily reigning over tulips:" she is herself a tulip, stalwart and splendid, whose high stem and bright colours shed their glory over the whole realm.

THE SOVEREIGNS OF SERVIA

In the awful light of the most appalling drama, not excepting that of Meyerling, which has been played in Royal houses for more than two centuries, the hitherto insignificant personalities of King Alexander of Servia and his Consort Queen Draga make instant appeal to our imagination. The lurid glow of disaster and blood now illumines their memory, and in time, far from sinking into the oblivion which might have enshrouded them had they died a natural and peaceful death, they will join those victims of fatality whose stories are the most thrilling in history or romance. They will sit side by side with Macbeth at the haunted supper-table, with Hamlet on the terrace of Elsinore, with Richard III. in the supreme battlefield, with Œdipus, Jocasta, and Hecuba, on the heights of a terrible destiny—so terrible that all their faults will be obliterated by the greatness of their sufferings and the horror of their last moments upon earth.

Belgrade is situated in one of the most picturesque landscapes in the world. The Danube and the Save join below the town, which, by people accustomed to

our Occidental cities, might easily be called a village, although here and there large modern houses rise from the midst of huts and modest buildings. Dwellings whose strange aspect defies every attempt at description, straggling cottages adorned with low wooden balconies, line the streets, where dust, dogs, and pigs are more abundant than passers-by, and seem more masters of the place than any human creature. Here and there a low-roofed church adorned with rough and vivid paintings, a large courtyard teeming with poultry, oxen, and domestic animals, or an upholsterer's tiny shop, cuts the line of other buildings. Upholsterers are more numerous in Belgrade than in any other town—at any rate, they seem here to play a more conspicuous part—and the striking feature of the work they achieve is shown in the immense number of coffins exposed to public view. These by no means contribute to delights of the eye, and it is with a feeling akin to relief that, as the driver hurries the jostled carriage along the rough pavement in a glory of silvery dust, one comes upon the sight of trees and grass and water.

The park of Topschideri, a beautifully wild garden, almost as rich and wild as the famous Paradon described by Zola, was the witness of a tragedy which happened in the Obrenovitch family. It was in these woods that the predecessor of King Milan was murdered. It appears that this Prince had given great offence to the Servians by his projected marriage

with Catherine Constantinovitch. This lady was his first cousin, and the Orthodox religion strictly forbids such unions. The Prince, determined to brave public opinion, took his bride for a drive among these woods and was there assassinated by a band of conspirators. They also wounded Catherine Constantinovitch, but not seriously, for she afterwards recovered and ultimately married a wealthy Servian. She still resides in Belgrade, and the recent tragic death of King Alexander and his Queen must have brought vividly to her mind the romantic circumstances and terrible end of her first betrothal.

Prince Milan, the nephew of the murdered Sovereign, succeeded to the throne left vacant by the tragic end of an idyll whose circumstances are still alive in the minds of the Servians and are yet sung by their poets.

King Milan's father was an officer in the Roumanian army—a tall, handsome, swaggering, kind-hearted, and good-natured soul, who was not very well off, and never dreamt that his son would one day be a King, as his first cousin, Miloch, was always expected to have an heir. In the meanwhile Captain Miloch Obrenovitch, a cavalry officer in the Roumanian army, had married one of the most beautiful women who ever existed—Mlle. Marie Catargi. Marie Catargi belonged to a good, though neither illustrious nor very ancient, Roumanian family. She represented the finest type of Moldavian beauty, and the classical purity of her features, the

wondrous colour and expression of her large green eyes, the graceful poise of her small head, and the sweetness of her manner, are still alive in the conversation of such of her surviving contemporaries as knew her.

It happened that during the earliest years of my childhood I heard King Milan's name so often that he became quite a familiar personage with me long before I met him. We had had the same governess. Our Scotch instructress, Miss Allen, had, many years before coming to us, superintended his education in the Roumanian home of his mother and maternal grandmother. Thus tales of his natural vivacity and boisterous habits, of his kind and generous heart, were daily related to us, while our schoolroom walls were covered with portraits of Prince Milan in his first boy's dress, of King Milan at the age of eight in top boots, of King Milan in Servian costume, and, finally, in the uniform of a Servian general. But Miss Allen had left him at an early age, and he then passed into the hands of professors. He was quick-witted, handsome, and clever, but very much spoilt; well aware, besides, that his destiny was not to be like that of his cousins. One day we were walking in the streets of Bucharest—Miss Allen and myself. I was then a girl of about thirteen, in all the bashful glory of dawning teens, and thinking little of the fact that my governess's former pupil was then paying a visit to our country and our King, when the whirl of a long row of carriages, the patter of

hoofs, the glittering array of a cavalry escort attracted our attention. We were in front of the palace, and, as is usual on such occasions, a crowd of curious gazers had assembled to see the Royal guest enter. King Milan's equipage stopped in front of the flight of steps, and he seemed about to enter the palace, when all at once he turned abruptly round, pushed aside the throng of officers gathered near him, and, making his way towards us, bowed and said, "Are you not Miss Allen? I am sure you are. I could not mistake your face, even after so many years. I have never forgotten you and how you took me to Baneaza, and how I clung to you because they had told me such terrible wolf stories, and I was *so* afraid the wolf would come and spring upon me."

King Milan was tall, robust, broad-shouldered, and as he spoke his young face flushed, while between the sentences he bit his lips and scarcely waited for an answer. The white feather of his high military casque threw a soft shadow on his face—there were fun, good-humour and happiness in his eyes. This was my first vision of him; and later on, amid rumours of his dashing career, his imprudent actions, his growing cruelty and love of money, I could but think of him as I had seen him that day, doing one of those little acts of spontaneous kindness and courtesy which cast a lustre on a monarch's life more surely than other more brilliant deeds.

The second time I met King Alexander's father was in Carlsbad, the very year before his death. So

much of the glamour and joy of youth had died out of his features and bearing that I should never have recognised him had not my parents, with whom he was well acquainted, and who had often spoken to me of his charm of manner, pointed out to me the still stalwart figure as he walked towards us between the trees of the park, where we were seated, taking our afternoon *café au lait*, as is the habit in Bohemia. He approached, and, in a quiet, smiling way, immediately asked to be introduced to me. He began a conversation on literature and art in which, after some remarks which showed that the King was a keen connoisseur of books, especially poetry, the talk quickly turned on more particular topics, on the politics of our respective countries, and finally on the tedium of the life of a King. With a short ironical laugh he alluded to all the shams and tricks of the position, saying: "You cannot imagine how delighted I should feel to be perfectly free. It has always been my dream to lead an independent life, and I have enough Roumanian blood in my veins to have even regretted not being able to live in gay and lively Bucharest, and to roll through its populous streets at the brisk pace of your excellent horses. I shall never be rid of the trouble and annoyance which are brought upon an individual by his connection with a throne, even now that I have succeeded in getting rid of my position. I shall always be tied to it because of Sacha—I mean my son, the King." His voice softened, and the twinkle in the pleasant

eye grew tender. "He is a clever boy, but as short-sighted mentally as he is in the material sense—and he is almost blind, you know. He has to use the strongest glasses you can think of. He is too good—he loves to trust people—he hates to distrust, which I do not; and in our Servian realm I would not trust any man when he had once crossed my threshold, even though he were my best friend. Then Sacha has been brought up in such a singular way; so spoilt on the one hand, so roughly treated on the other. It was somewhat hard on him to be deprived first of his mother, then of myself—*un orphélin artificiel* (an artificial orphan) I sometimes call him, poor little one. But the people love him well. They have seen him grow up under their eyes, they have watched him as he became every day more like them and less like me. Faugh! What a life would be his if he knew, as I do, how one is obliged to keep awake for nights together—to plan, to unravel intrigues!"

For a few seconds King Milan's good-humoured smile vanished, his eyes took on a more hawkish expression, and lines of bitterness and strong decision curved about his mouth. But the smile soon returned and the talk flowed into another channel.

All that evening I could speak of nothing but the ex-King's charm and easy erudition, and again all the evil legends and all the whirl of gossip and slander which had been set afloat in my presence whenever his name was mentioned vanished completely. The

next day, as I was sitting in the hotel garden, I noticed the same tall form among the trees, not far from the bench where I was resting. King Milan, after having sent in his card to the hotel, took a seat near mine. He did not perceive me, and remained plunged in reverie—one of those sad moods which often overtake human creatures when in the company of their own souls. A creeping sense of depression had apparently fallen upon him. His lax hand let the thick walking-stick fall unheeded upon the gravel. He had taken off his broad-brimmed hat, and there was so much sadness gathered on his forehead that an unconscious emotion of pity struck my heart, and I sat as still as possible for fear of disturbing the day-dream of that care-stricken man.

Perhaps at that hour some presentiment, some fear for the future of his beloved son Sacha, the bereaved young King, at Belgrade, far from father and mother; perhaps some shadow of his own approaching end had fallen upon that stalwart being, who had loved enjoyment, revelry, and money so well.

The servant returned to tell "the gentleman" that the persons he desired to see were not at home. With a weary gesture the ex-King rose. In the broad avenue he resumed his easy gait once more. When I went up to our apartment I found his simple card, "Count de Takovo," on the tray, and thought no more of that afternoon's impression till the day when I heard of his untimely end at Vienna, where he had so passionately desired the presence of

his beloved Sacha, the ungrateful son who did not come.

As to my first meeting with Queen Nathalie, it took place a very little time after her divorce, when she paid a visit to our Court. We all went to the station to witness her arrival, as she was more especially interesting and attractive to us because she did not belong to a Royal family, and because she is through her mother related to a great number of Roumanian families. Her husband's relatives never spoke very kindly of her, and in the long run we had fallen into the habit of considering her as a most arrant upstart, who had always endeavoured to convince every one that birth and not good looks and good luck had brought her to the position she enjoyed. Rumours of her ambitious designs, her desire to make the Servians detest their King, and, finally, to take his place upon the throne, besides petty anecdotes about her pretensions, which spread like wildfire, caused the repudiated Queen to be considered with more curiosity than commiseration. Our King alone had stood by her, and always referred to the great tact and courtesy with which she had received him at Belgrade. So he would now, in her days of woe, do his best to show her kindness and regard. When, as the train came in, the ex-Queen, who was tasting the bitter cup of misfortune, saw the Sovereign of the land waiting for her on the platform, she obviously felt a glow of triumph and of gratitude. As he went up and offered her his

arm, the beautiful velvety black eyes of the Queen filled with tears. Though of an aspect somewhat heavy and massive, she was then an apparition of exultant beauty and health. But in every step and gesture even a casual observer could detect a singular mixture of tremor and resolution, the fear of losing an atom of her dignity, yet an anxiety to appear perfectly at her ease; a terrible difficulty in discovering the exact measure of condescension and familiarity which a queen is called upon to distribute, and the certainty that this thought was ever in her mind, "I am a Queen: I must act and feel and speak like a Queen." She wore a dress of black satin, thickly studded with jet stars and pearls. Her beautiful raven locks waved on her shoulders and even round her neck at every movement of her head. Her complexion, of a creamy hue and yet rosy, one of the loveliest I have ever seen, gave her the aspect of a sturdy mountain deity, a fairy made of less ethereal essence than fairies are usually imagined to embody. A creature who lives in a land of clouds and tempests must needs represent strength and valour: thus Queen Nathalie gave the impression of being some wild goddess of rocks and moors. But the mystery that education and, maybe, heredity bestows—the *je ne sais quoi* which makes queens and duchesses and those happy few who are queens without ever approaching a throne and duchesses without wearing a coronet—was not present to render the Balkan beauty a distinct type of grandeur and mis

fortune. I cannot but remember what a great writer once said: "It requires much intelligence on the part of an unfortunate woman to wear her misfortunes like a diadem and her tears like a crown." And that sort of intelligence Queen Nathalie never possessed, although her virtue is perfect and her heart tender.

When, for instance, she entered the big drawing-room at the Castel Polesch at Sinaïa by the side of our own Queen "Carmen Sylva," great was the difference visible. The Royal lady, from her infancy accustomed to play the part of a public personage, could do so without the slightest effort, and always succeeded in effacing her personality in her desire to draw out the soul and thoughts of those to whom she spoke. Queen Nathalie spoke only of herself, her ideas about Servia, its inhabitants, the army, the Sovereigns whom she had met; and in those hours of conversation the one awful mistake of all her life was conspicuous to our eyes—a mistake which made us readily understand why her great qualities, her purity and good intentions, had all proved useless. Queen Nathalie, unlike every other Queen, has insisted upon treating her private affairs, her disputes with her husband, her displeasure at being forsaken for another, as affairs of State.

After the official luncheon both the Queens retired to the Oriental room of the castle, where I was summoned to join them. The chamber was fragrant with the odour of flowers, and the sound

of the mountain torrent was borne in upon the sultry air. We had left the doors open, and the dazzling light kindled a fire of golden rays in its reflection from the walls, which were hung with richly-embroidered silks, while round the seats flashed gold and silver arrows.

Queen Nathalie in her black dress formed a contrast to the luxurious display of Asiatic pomp. "Carmen Sylva's" sweet countenance and soft white Roumanian garb seemed like a flake of whiteness fallen from Western skies into a room worthy the dreams of the Arabian nights. Queen Nathalie played nervously with her fan, at a loss at first how to engage in the conversation. Then all at once, as if moved by an irresistible impulse, she said: "I have had no letter from Sacha this morning. I am so thankful to spend this day of anxiety with your Majesty. When I am by myself I can do nothing but walk to and fro and weep."

"Does the child write to you every day?" said our Queen gently; "that is a great consolation."

"Every day? Oh, no, only once a week; but this is the day when the letter ought to have come. I live all the days of the week in expectation of this day." Then she stopped and said: "May I shut the door? The dreadful light is *so* trying to my eyes."

I had forestalled the poor Queen's gesture, and as the door closed the walls and furniture sank into a haze of reddish, sleepy splendour; the glory of the

summer day, the sense of joy, were shut out, and the torrent was heard no more. Our Queen took up the last words: "You expect—you wait. Oh, do not weep, so long as you have something to wait for, something to look forward to."

"Look," said Queen Nathalie, "here is my boy at the age of seven, and here he is as he looks now; a fine fellow, and *so* fond of me. I am afraid they may teach him to hate me—teach him to be hard and selfish, and a coward. Oh, what do we desire our sons to become! — what heroes and what saints!"

"As a hero he would die young," answered Queen Elizabeth. "As a saint he would go through much suffering before he became a saint. Wish him only to be a good man. All human joy comes from goodness."

"But he will be a King—a grand and striking figure."

"Alas!" said "Carmen Sylva," "is it not the grandest, the most striking thing on earth to be a good King in a quiet way? Do you hope to see him again soon?"

"Oh, yes, perhaps; but I shall never, never have him to myself again. He will never be my own Sacha again."

"A Queen's child does not belong to the Queen, but to the people, who will tend and cherish him; and to fate, and to God."

"Yes, to the people, to fate, to God," echoed

Queen Nathalie. And no presentiment crossed her brow as she lifted up her head with determination.

The second time I saw the Queen of Servia was at a garden-party in Paris—one of those assemblies which are but a pretence to show off spring toilettes and listen to pleasant music. The big drawing-room windows opened on to the lawn, where in the middle of a group of ladies I recognised Queen Nathalie, and even found that she was little altered, though that air of heaviness had now settled upon her and the rosy tint of her complexion had been replaced by a more vivid hue. She looked more depressed and more dignified than in Roumania.

I took a chair outside on to the terrace and watched the gay scene. I had to wait for some friends who had given me an appointment there. Two ladies drew their chairs close to the spot where I was seated. One of them, a Frenchwoman, bowed; while the other, whom I did not know, turned her back upon me. She wore a simple grey serge dress, and immediately she spoke I recognised the long, trailing accent of Russians when they speak the French language. It was Madame Draga Maschin, afterwards the ill-starred Queen; and though at the time I did not know her, yet unwittingly I became interested in her, and was even wishing for an opportunity of seeing her face when the words struck me, pronounced in sing-song tones: "*I*

marry! Oh, I could not dream of such a thing. I am an old woman"—a low laugh accompanied the words—"I have finished with Satan and his pomps. Besides, no one ever takes any notice of me."

A mute protestation came from the other lady, and then the insinuating voice went on. "I am not a coquette, nor a flirt, nor any of those horrid amusing things! My sole ambition is centred on one thought—to please *her*." And she pointed to the spot on the lawn where Queen Nathalie was standing.

"And you spend a pleasant life?"

"Yes; but a very quiet one. I have been *so* unhappy, so misunderstood, so ill-used by my husband's family since his death that I only sigh after repose. Biarritz is restful, and the Queen is so good that I have become very much attached to her. I am more than a lady-in-waiting." I heard again that low, rippling laugh which betrayed a strong personality, though the words tried to deny or veil it. "I am sometimes even lady's maid. I love to comb her beautiful black hair; and then we relate the story of our lives to each other. She also has suffered. How horrible, oh, how horrible, it must be to be a Queen! How can any sensible woman envy a Queen?"

"Hush!" and the other lady whispered in her companion's ear, and the stranger turned brusquely round in her chair and looked me full in the face.

Her countenance was well calculated to charm though not to command attention; the features though delicate, lacked refinement, and there was about the nose a deficiency of classical lines, while the mouth twitched in a nervous way as if moved to smile without the courage to do so. The glossy black hair waved round a low forehead where furrows were already settled, traced not by age but by stern, resolute thought and action. The eyes and eyebrows alone were perfect, and spoke of an Oriental houri's power. They had a vacant gaze, as if intent upon a far-off vision, yet when they fixed themselves upon the present scene they shot a gleam of resolution and authority. The figure was frail and the manner unassuming. The gaze that rested upon my face was soon withdrawn, and the conversation began again in the same train.

Madame Draga Maschin again described the sorrows of her life and the thousand details of Queen Nathalie's goodness to her, while twilight was slowly creeping over the Parisian garden, and an atmosphere of peace settled around us. The hum of lively voices and the strains of military music, servants gliding about laden with trays bearing fruit, ices, and wines, the light touch of the sleepy sun falling upon the muslin draperies and scarfs, all inclined to soothe the senses with an hour of lulled content.

"Oh, we are so happy in France," resumed

Madame Draga, as she took a glass of champagne and daintily raised it to her lips. "I would never go to Servia again if I could help it."

"But who, or what, could oblige you to go to that nasty country again?"

"Oh, it is not nasty; it is my country; but I have enemies there, whereas here every one loves me. But you understand the Queen is such a devoted mother. She will one day desire to see more of her son than she does at Biarritz, where he comes only for a short time. She will return to Belgrade, and then I shall have to accompany her, and if she settles there—oh, then, farewell flirtations; farewell all hopes of marriage. But I won't marry again; I am too old and plain, and I don't flirt. Besides, I suppose I should have even forgotten my native language. I am getting so cosmopolitan that, only think, the young King, when he came to Biarritz this summer, discovered that there were many words in Servian I did not understand, and he laughed—he teased me."

"What is he like, the young King?"

"Not good-looking—a child still in thoughts and manners—very plain even, one may call him, and *so* short-sighted. We tried to teach him to dance, but he looked as awkward as a bear dancing on red coals. A young savage, too—he does not know how to bow, how to speak to a lady. But then he is young—quite a child. He asked me to waltz with him because he dared not trust himself to do it with any

of the other ladies present. Now, you know, I do not dance ; I have not danced for years. I said to the King, 'Sire, I am too old to waltz,' but the Queen insisted on my guiding her son through the difficulties of the dance. But the King made a false step ; he almost fell, and I am sure we made every one laugh."

" Then, if you do not like dancing, if you do not like flirting, if you do not like the idea of marrying again, what is there you do like ? "

" My Queen, and a peaceful life by her side, and many other things : music, for instance—military music. There is something so unrestrained, so powerful in military music. Just listen to the band—it is just playing—let us look at the programme. Oh ! Schumann, is it ? I dote upon Schumann."

Draga now had risen. She was of middle stature, and rested a small well-gloved hand on the marble balustrade of the terrace. Night was setting in, and on the delicate features a low streak of red light lingered as the sinking sun sent a last farewell from among the distant trees. Behind the slight tulle veil a smile flitted across the curving lips, paled by the sudden chillness of the hour. Again into the eyes that look of vacant fixity had entered, and they appeared to gaze far, far into the future —far, far into the depths of the blood-red sun.

The languid Schumann melody came ebbing to our feet like the waters of a melodious sea, and

the ill-fated woman listened to the same music that on the supreme morning of her life was to sound through the avenues and gardens around the palace where, after the madness of despair and useless struggle, the Royal pair lay stark and cold.

THE POPE LEO XIII

THE fate which rules over human existence seems to delight in the most violent contrasts, in scenes of woe and grandeur succeeding each other with wonderful speed: hence we find recorded almost in the same month the tragical disappearance of a royal couple who died midst floods of blood and screams of terror, and the peaceful end of one of the greatest Popes that the Roman Catholic Church has ever acknowledged as head. By turns we shiver and dream and pray when we come to compare the events of that fateful June night in Belgrade, its infuriated mob, its maddened passions and fearful murder, with the moments which marked the entrance into eternity of the White Ascetic, as some called him, the White Sage and Pastor, Leo XIII.

A few years ago I had the honour of being received by the Pope on a clear January morning, which the sun's bright rays rendered as silvery as the flight of the wheeling doves above St. Peter's massive dome. The breeze, freshened by the coolness of the night, blew lightly from the Sabine Hills, bringing with it a scent of pagan flowers, a thrill of

pagan beauty, to the sacred precincts, as if to symbolise the eternal fight ever to be fought between the loveliness of outward forms, the glamour of light and colour, and the austerity of souls who have turned to Heaven on finding the world void. Ample time for reflection was left to me during the long interval we had to wait before entering the Vatican, as an immense number of Tuscan pilgrims had to be received before us—early as the hour had been at which we had driven through the high stone gate. On alighting from the carriage we remained in the vast court, which is surrounded with a graceful colonnade, and here our black veils were nearly torn from our heads by the swift morning wind. Now and then a busy *contadina* paced quickly along the pavement and entered the colossal church. In my bosom, though I tried to think only of the great moment which was to follow, strife was raging; memories swift and piercing as arrows crossed my mind, and I saw the mute forms—those forms of bronze and marble that fill the Belvedere—rise in battle array against the altar and the palace where the White Ascetic lived and prayed. Extraordinary it seemed to me and almost appalling in that early morning hour, when silvery doves cooed and circled —appalling and extraordinary it seemed that the realms of immortal harmony should touch the realm of immortal desires; that this religion, whose last vestiges were scattered under the naked feet of rude fishermen, should reign in close vicinity to its victor.

Almost impiously I found myself imagining that in the blue moonlit nights of the Latin Campagna scenes worthy of northern ballads might again take place. I imagined the fettered Venus and Apollo shaking off their slumber and leaving their pedestals to walk through this same court of dreams and peace, then crossing the white Vatican halls to go and gaze upon the features of Christ and the Madonna, painted over and over again by Raphael and Fra Beato. And I imagined them discovering that it was the same love of art which had made them lovely and eternal in the memory of man, that made Jesus and His holy Mother dear to reverence and faith; that there was a link between them which ages could not destroy, and that they would again and again return to their contemplation in the moonlit galleries. But what could the stony multitude of gods and heroes say as they glided past the chamber where the White Ascetic slept? What god or hero could they compare with him who was neither God nor man, but a mortal fraught with human weakness—a creature of clay, though adored as a deity; an old, old man, with gestures weak as those of a little child, yet whose eyes shone and glimmered like the eyes of those whose fate it is to rule and to control? . . . .

At this juncture in my reverie a flood of people streamed from the Vatican doors. All were talking loudly, and all were in the humble attire of Italian peasants or small bourgeois. The emotion of having seen "Il Papa" made their tones shrill as each tried

to prove that he had seen him better than his neighbours. From such scattered sentences as reached me I discovered that they had first heard Mass at St. Peter's, and had then been brought into the presence of his Holiness, who had addressed a speech to them. He had also blessed the beads they held in their hands or clasped eagerly to their bosoms. There was a hum of happy excitement among them while we vainly tried to pierce the crowd, and it was only after much difficulty that we succeeded in reaching the short flight of steps leading to the great hall. Here an idle group of soldiers allowed us to pass on showing our letter of audience, and we ascended the main staircase. From hall to hall we were ushered by footmen wearing the picturesque costume designed for them by Michael Angelo at the request of his friend and patron Leo X. In these vast echoing halls a large number of soldiers stood motionless, and preceding us always was one of those *camerias di casa* or *di spada*, who are the Pope's chamberlains, and who all belong to the most ancient Roman families. Here the stately form of a monsignor, whose violet sash relieved the uniformity of his black cassock, there the whispering apparition of an archbishop surrounded by a small train of servitors and friends, announced that we were in a place teeming with tradition—perhaps the one place upon earth where tradition is still living and still respected. With but few exceptions, the figures we saw were the same as had graced these marble halls two

centuries ago, and a Pope of long gone ages might have risen from his tomb and found no change in the Vatican but that of face or voice. Of all the Courts I had visited this Court now seemed to me the most gorgeous and the best arranged.

Upon a sign from one of the ushers we stopped to wait, and our emotion grew intense. We had been told that as we did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church, we should not have to kneel on entering the room where the Pope would receive us, but make a very low curtsey, something like a genuflexion, before approaching him. Although not as the head of our religion, those of the Orthodox faith look upon him as the successor of St. Peter and hold him in reverence, especially among the cultivated classes. Among our peasantry I am ashamed to own that the fact of being a Papist is tantamount to the confession of being a heathen; but in Transylvania and even Roumania there are many of my countrymen who profess the Catholic creed and are yet unmolested. Even in the immediate vicinity of Bucharest there is a Roman Catholic settlement, and to this fact the monsignor who held conversation with us while we waited made allusion, asking us many questions about our native land.

A hasty summons, a noise of opening doors, and in a few seconds we found ourselves in presence of the Pope. We had walked as in a dream, and I would be embarrassed at this moment to tell whether we actually knelt or forbore to do so, whether our

curtseys and genuflexions were correct, or were omitted altogether. I awoke to reality only when I noticed that the Pope was showing us a seat by his side. He occupied a high chair, where the extraordinary whiteness of his garb and his face made one large luminous spot. I remembered having heard from some nun whose special mission it was to weave and cut and sew the Pope's vestments that he never wore anything on his body that was not absolutely white. As his pale thin hands rested on the woollen tunic, I saw that St. Peter's ring, the heavy gold circlet on his third finger, was the only note of colour in that symphony of immaculate snow. A huge purple amethyst contains St. Peter's hair—a few threads only—which lend to the ring its high significance. By that ring the Pope is Bridegroom of the Church, her Spouse and her Beloved, as once the Doge of Venice was the affianced of the Adriatic Sea, on throwing into the bosom of its wáters a huge symbolic ring. Slowly, with intent gaze, the Pope scanned our countenances, and before speaking sank back in his high chair with closed eyes as if weary beforehand of the coming exertion.

There was no trace of colour in his wan cheeks, not the least sign of blood under the skin to mark the curve of the lips; his nostrils were tinged by the hue of pale amber that floated on his forehead; he was like a slumbering marble statue stretched on a mediæval tomb. His inaudible breath did not stir the folds of his tunic, his

heavy eyelids fell like the petals of a faded flower, and he seemed already dead. We could believe ourselves present at the great spectacle of a Pope's dying hour, and remained in awed terror till the motionless form moved, stirred; and finally, as if the touch of the spirit from above had inspired him with life and force, Leo XIII. opened his bright black eyes, threw his hands apart, and took a long deep breath. His lips trembled; but in tones whose steadfast clearness can never be forgotten by those who have once heard them, he began speaking fluently as one accustomed to question and treat of every subject.

He spoke French with a strong Italian accent and nasal aspirations which rendered his voice peremptory and even piercing. Thousands of small wrinkles marked his sunken face and seemed to pass from one feature to another like the shadows on an autumn stream. His kindness and his ready smile gave him a benevolent expression which might almost have meant weakness but for the piercing look of the restless coal-black eyes that wandered like living torches. The voice, accustomed to scatter orisons and benedictions, now spoke of everyday events, and I could not help remembering how I had once been thrilled at a large function under St. Peter's dome on hearing the "pater" said by that white old man who now turned towards us with such sweet familiarity and inquired:

"Are you going to stay long in Rome? I would

advise you to spend the Easter holidays with us. You cannot know the real beauty, the real holiness of Rome, if you have not heard the Easter functions in our basilica and at St. Jean de Lateran. Have you visited St. Paolo fuori le Mura ?"

"Yes, Holy Father," and I remained a little embarrassed.

This the Pope quickly noticed, and guessing the cause of my hesitation, said in an easy natural tone :

"You have been told, haven't you, that my desire is to be buried there ?" Then turning to another topic : "I am very much interested in Roumania, and in all the spiritual children I have there—Roumanians make very good Roman Catholics."

"Of course, Holy Father, once they are Roman Catholics they are true to the faith. . . ."

"And all would be true, every one of you, if you could but understand and fulfil my great desire—the union of the Churches."

"Oh, that seems to me impossible, Holy Father."

"To you, but not to me. The Shepherd longs to bring back the vagrant lamb to the fold. . . ."

"But, Holy Father, if the lamb does not know it is vagrant, and is convinced that it is he who belongs to the true fold . . . ?"

A flash of indignation shot from the curiously keen black eyes. Then the Pope sank back into his chair to resume that attitude of utter prostration which he assumed twice or three times during our visit. It seemed as if he fell into a trance, during

which inspirations from above visited him, but now a sign from his fingers urged me to speak on.

"Besides, your Holiness knows much better than myself that the differences between our religions lies only in outward signs, that we enjoy the blessings of Communion, that the Holy Virgin is adored by us with the same fervour as by the Roman Catholics. The great impediment to the Union of the Churches would arise from the fact—from the fact" — here I stammered slightly, and then stopped short as I had begun a sentence which in presence of the Pope I could not well finish. The great impediment which I was about to be so imprudent as to mention was the certainty that our Orthodox creed would never recognise the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope.

Again he sat erect, again the strange gleaming eyes kindled with a vivid flame. "You err, and you need tuition. Security and life are to be found here only, in the place where I stand and upon which the Church is built. But I have been told you are a poet, and therefore much more versed in the gentle art of Horace and Virgil than in theological discussion." The voice softened; an amused smile crossed the thin lips. "I am a poet also, and I will repeat to you the Latin verse I composed this morning after Mass, just before I received the faithful pilgrims of Tuscany." Closing his eyes the Pope slowly recited two verses in praise

of the Virgin Mary and of Spring. Then he inquired about the climate of our country, and said:

"You live near the place where Ovid was exiled and where he regretted Rome."

"Not very near, but your Holiness is not mistaken; the town where Ovid spent the latter years of his life, with his eyes ever turned towards the sea where he expected to perceive the vessel that would bear him home, is situated within the Roumanian kingdom."

"Oh, then I hope when you return to Roumania you will be like Ovid and sigh after Rome, and I sincerely pray Heaven that your desire to see the Holy City again may be fulfilled. Carry my benediction to all my spiritual children you may meet there, and I will remember you in my prayers, notwithstanding—" and at that moment the smile that curved the pale lips reminded me of a similar expression I had seen in a portrait of Cardinal Richelieu,—"I will remember you in my prayers, notwithstanding that terrible impediment you were about to mention, but did not dare to name. . . ."

When we descended the broad staircase it was almost noon, and the full light of the Roman sunshine flooded the marbles and the pictures all around. The shrill clear sound of that imperious voice, the white reclining form, and the start with which the great Pope returned to signs of life and interest after appearing to be plunged in meditation and repose—

all the particulars of that memorable interview still dwell with me, though often since then have I beheld the august figure of the Pope carried high above the crowd, and often heard the peremptory tones call to Heaven or murmur prayers and benedictions. On such occasions Leo XIII. was more than a priest, more than the Head of a Church, more than a human creature; he became the very symbol of faith and spirituality, whereas during that half-hour in that chamber of the Vatican Palace, he seemed to me an image of pure and real kindliness, one to whom the humblest could come for comfort and advice. For a time the little lamp was extinguished which used to be seen from every part of Rome, and to which the people would point saying, "Look, there is the Pope's lamp!" It soon shone again, but the grand white figure of the Pope, whose title "Lumen in cœlo" had been pronounced by predictions four hundred years before his day, the towering spirit of Leo XIII. is no more. So white, so pale, so bereft of flesh, yet so strong; so near to death, yet so fully alive to every manifestation of his calling, he seemed immortal, though ever on the verge of the tomb. He loved the poor with an almost fierce affection, and had many a hard fight to defend them against those who believed that the Pope's duty lay on the side of the prosperous and the powerful.

"I have sent the richest wine which was sent me to my family this morning," said he one day. Some

one answered: "Then Count Pecci and Count Moroni will be able to appreciate the good presents your Holiness has received and given them."

"Pecci, Moroni?" repeated the Pope, "I know not what you mean. My family walks barefoot, and lies in hospitals or sultry dens stretched upon hard pallets. Pecci, Moroni—they are Joachim Pecchi's nephews; but the others, the orphans and the exiled, the wanderers and the exhausted, they are mothers, sisters, and brothers to me."

QUEEN VICTORIA

However numerous and interesting may be the descriptions of personages who have come in touch with the great Queen, however thrilling the narratives in connection with her public and private life, still, every one who had the honour of approaching that illustrious lady may feel justified in hoping that yet more remains to be told of one whose every movement, whose every word, now belongs to history. When, as in the case of the present writer, the emotion which arises from the presence of so revered a sovereign is felt at an age when enthusiasm and desire unite to make heart and soul ardent and eager, it is a joy to catch each sign of feeling, to cherish the lightest impression, to retain even the smallest detail. I am not afraid, therefore, to appear daring, or lacking in modesty and common sense, when I say that my own experience of Queen Victoria's kindness and intellectual power may prove a novelty even to those who have read the innumerable books and biographies that have been written concerning her.

All the circumstances of our journey to Scotland,

whither I accompanied Queen Elizabeth of Roumania ("Carmen Sylva"), are yet so fresh in my mind that I am scarcely able to realise how far off those days are now, beyond our reach for ever. Methinks I see again the little station of Ballater, gaily decorated with foliage and wild flowers, as our Royal train rushed in, then came to a sudden stop in front of the eternal red carpet. Red carpets and white gloves are so associated with official receptions, so familiar and so loathsome to travelling Royalty, that "Carmen Sylva" always says: "Oh, what would my travels be like, how joyous and charming, without those obnoxiously new red carpets and those awful white gloves! What would I not give to see bare stones and bare hands before me!"

Methinks I can hear again the shrill notes of the bagpipes as the Highland regiments burst into sight, playing a glad salute. The doors of our compartment are flung open; the Prince of Wales mounts a few steps and helps our Queen to alight. We know well that everything will pass off in the conventionally ceremonious way which renders one Royal interview so much like another; every movement, every syllable is studied and decided beforehand; every one seems delighted, and declares this moment to be eventful and entrancing. How natural, how free from constraint, how simple and sincere they all seem to be while accomplishing the dismal duty! How difficult even for the closest observer to detect the slightest hesitation or passing

shade of annoyance on the well-trained countenance; how impossible, if one is not aware of the truth, to discover that the conversations obey the same unflinching rules and never vary; how striking appears the merit of those who can give to them such a semblance of life that at times even the Princes themselves forget they are playing a part! Now, as a matter of course, all these ceremonies and salutes are a serious drawback if any person present has a secret desire to gather information, or is bent on some psychological inquiry dear to that spirit of philosophy which the true soul pursues everywhere. The visages, serene and courteous, wear a silken mask; as with the red carpet and the white gloves, a glare and gloss is cast upon things whose nakedness would otherwise be too apparent, but which makes them perfectly monotonous.

"Don't you believe it must be always the same red carpet we see at every station where I have to alight?" asks the Queen.

Yet we feel obliged to confess that leisure and an agreeable freedom are obtained by the facilities attendant on Royal arrivals. No porter to scream after, no anxiety about the luggage, no rough old gentleman to elbow his way just between one's innocent self and a foot-warmer, no grating quarrels, in fact none of the thousand nuisances that often change the station of a big city into a corner of Dante's hell.

So there we were, in the grey mist of a raw

September morning, bowing and curtseying right and left. This was for the moment our only serious duty ; when we had done so for at least ten minutes, in a methodical and, I must say, most elegant way, we could easily look round and try to recognise all the illustrious personages who had come to meet us. These were the Princess of Wales, the Princess of Battenberg, her husband, Prince Henry, the late Duke of Clarence, Princess Victoria of Wales. Our Queen walked lightly from one to the other, and, leaning on the arm which the Prince of Wales had proffered, they now exchanged quite a volley of affectionate compliments.

"How kind of you to have come so far! We really did not dare ask you to come."

"But how could I be twelve hours distant from Queen Victoria without doing my utmost to see her?"

"But we really are so agreeably surprised, so charmed to greet you here. Till the very last moment we were afraid you would not make the journey."

Yet we were all aware that the meeting between Roumania's Queen and the Queen of England had been arranged long before we left Roumania. I was convinced that I should see very little of Queen Victoria during the two days we were to spend at Balmoral, and I was already making plans for scouring the Highland hills and glens, in the company of the amiable ladies-in-waiting whose acquaintance we had just made, and who spoke gaily of their drives

and walks. When I bent low over the Queen's proffered hand, my sole idea was to cast a hasty glance at her face. My glance quickly took in the whole countenance,—the clear azure of her childish eyes, the complexion rosy instead of red as I had always supposed her skin to be, and the extreme candour of her looks and smile; an expression so strange in the physiognomy of an aged grandmother, that I kept pondering over the fact and immediately wrote in my Journal de Voyage: "La reine a un visage limpide—ses rides sont jeunes." (The Queen has a limpid countenance—her wrinkles are young.)

My expectations were completely at fault; no leisure was to be left for an afternoon in the forest or the park round the castle; we were told after luncheon that the Queen invited us all to tea. The hours fled swiftly as we sat in the billiard room talking gaily and hearing the other ladies tell all about the Court of England, while in our turn we described to them the customs of our own. There is always between *dames d'honneur* an exchange of opinions regarding etiquette which constitutes a subject of conversation unknown in other circles of society. In this I have always found the greatest amusement, since personal feelings and inveterate patriotism are bound to enter the lists; and it is seldom that the friendly talk ends without some acrimony on both sides, each party being intent on proving the superiority of its particular Court and Sovereign.

The typical *hof-dame*, however, only exists in Germany. In England the ladies who have the honour of attending upon their Queen still preserve sentiments, opinions, and nerves of their own; whereas German Court ladies soon become mere machines, give themselves up blindly to their duty, and preserve so little of their individuality that it is impossible to distinguish one of them from another. They are not human beings, they are mechanical imitations bent upon maintaining propriety and fine manners, with the humble conviction that it is an immense distance which separates a King from his subjects.

Prince Henry of Battenberg came himself to apprise us that tea would soon be served, and he showed us the way to the Queen's drawing-room. We followed duly upon his steps, and when he pushed open a door we found ourselves in the presence of the Royal family. All the Princesses were standing; Queen Victoria alone sat in a large arm-chair. She makes a slight movement as we advance towards her, and asks whether we have not found our first day in the Highlands too dreary and too long. Her voice is clear though not very strong, the French syllables tremble a little, yet she speaks the language well, with a very slight accent. She knows she can address me in English:

"Take a chair and sit by my side," she says, waving the others away and indicating a sofa not far off. I know that a seat must be close by, but I am

short-sighted and in great confusion, so remain motionless, while Princess Beatrice, pitying my embarrassed countenance, wheels round a chair and places me somewhat behind the Queen but still very near, where I shall be able to see and hear her every movement, her very breathing. . . . To hear the breathing of a living creature, to listen eagerly for the regular return of that slight sound, has ever impressed me with an emotion deeper than that which even the heaving of the sea, or the pulsations of a clock, can give. Thus while listening to the faint movements of that gentle breast, my thoughts flew towards the moment when millions would hang anxiously on the feeble sighs which should announce the approach of death. I pictured to myself what the nations, what the whole world, would say when the blood, stirred into action by the weak breathing whose cadence now stirred my hair, would be growing colder and colder, and when the shadows of mourning should fall upon kingdoms and empires heavier far than the shadows of night. Then the high meaning, the symbolism of monarchy burst upon my soul as I sat there so near the Queen; and I smiled to see how different from my vagrant dreams were these surroundings; how familiar and old-fashioned the aspect of the faded drawing-room, the tints of the huge furniture whose coverings had not been changed for years; how quaint and even rustic the few trifling objects decorating the shelves and tables. No trace of grandeur, no hint

of the exalted state of the illustrious owner lurked there.

Through the open window a sharp evening wind was beginning to blow right in our faces; the twilight hour was fast coming. Still, the hills were fair to look upon, in the silvery rays of the wet atmosphere. The Queen of Roumania and the Duchess of Albany were merrily turning over the leaves of a large music album and pointing out their favourite songs to a beautiful young girl who stood by the open piano. The unknown damsel appeared neither moved nor fluttered. The firm and perfect lines of her profile, her cold smile, and the respectful silence with which she received the eager words of the royal ladies, made a striking contrast with their playful condescension, and I could not make out who the girl was till Princess Beatrice advanced towards her mother and said:

"Mamma, she will sing three songs—Elizabeth has chosen them. I am told her voice is excellent and very well trained."

"Is it really so? You know, dear, she has to be a good singer, a perfect artist, if she sings before Elizabeth," answered Queen Victoria—and I comprehended that no small anxiety was felt by the august hostess on account of our own Queen's musical gifts and reputation.

"Yes, mamma, you may feel perfectly easy. Helen (the Duchess of Albany) and my husband have heard her sing this morning. Is your seat

comfortable, mother? Does not the light disturb you?" And into the eyes of the Princess Beatrice came a look of unutterable tenderness and solicitude. She was at that time in the prime of robust and healthy womanhood; her lips and her eyes spoke of happiness, and though she could not be called pretty or fascinating, had no pretensions whatever to either of these adjectives, her cordial smile, her fine figure, her amiable conversation, and above all the unceasing care she took to make every one at ease and content, rendered her most attractive.

"Mamma, don't you think she should begin to sing?" she asked. "Just a little song to begin with? Henry, go and tell her to sing the shortest of the three little songs."

"But Alsa has not come yet," said the Queen. "I will have no singing till Alsa is here. Of course the young girl will be as delighted to sing before Alsa as before myself." The voice of the Queen lingered caressingly on the name "Alsa." She alluded to Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, and as she laid particular stress on the last sentences, a sense of the grandeur which had hitherto been missing in the scene, took hold of me—not because of mere affection, the attachment of a mother to her daughter-in-law—but because of this instinctive homage rendered by the actual Queen to the future Queen-Consort, a tribute of respect to the Heiress of the Throne, the lady on whom the hopes of the realm were centred. The proud consciousness of

her own grandeur already reflected in the grandeur of the dynasty lit up Queen Victoria's eyes and gave those few broken sentences a significance which went far beyond their apparent meaning.

"Of course Alsa knows she must come—but as Bertie (the Prince of Wales) is going off by the five o'clock train and she accompanies him to the station, she will be somewhat late perhaps. So, if it please you, the young girl will sing immediately."

"No singing for the moment," replied the Queen. "We will wait for the Princess of Wales." And to cut short all further remark, while the Queen of Roumania was lightly touching the open pianoforte and delighting the Princesses who lingered near by playing some Roumanian airs, Queen Victoria turned her head towards me and beckoned me to pull my chair still nearer. There was a gentle calmness in her gesture, in fact all that happened appeared to be at the same time as strange and as familiar as those dreams whose memory takes us back to the spots we have cherished and are sure never to see again.

Her Majesty questioned me closely as to my musical tastes and preferences. When I mentioned that my favourite composers were Mozart and Wagner:

"How wide apart lie your ideals!" she said. "I am so fond of music myself; and I love reading the biography of the great musicians. They have all had such sad and thrilling experiences. I have till

quite lately played on the piano and even practised whenever I found time enough to do so, because I always remember the happy days when my darling husband used to open the instrument himself and lead me to the music stool and then find a book of Mendelssohn—he loved Mendelssohn—and point out the passages he wanted to hear. Now I am rather ashamed to play, I am such an old woman. One day one of my youngest granddaughters caught me practising and laughed outright. 'Why, grandmamma,' she said, 'how can *you* practise now, and what for?' Her remark struck me. . . I left off playing for some time. But then you see my dear husband taught me to love all things beautiful and good—I learnt to seek them for his sake—now I return to them often in memory of him. You cannot guess to what extent my life is interwoven with the life of the dead. I only feel alive when in close communion with the dead. My prayers lead me toward them. Their spirits and their power guide me. I am sure that the dead we have loved pray constantly on behalf of the living!"

I then took occasion to relate to Her Majesty how touching and true was the love which the villagers in Roumania bestow on their dead, and how many touching ceremonies and songs point out this particular trait of our national instincts. The Queen said:

"I am beginning to get quite fond of Roumania. Roumania is happy indeed to possess such a Queen

as yours is. I never could have believed before meeting her that I was liable to get so rapidly attached to a mere stranger. Everything she says and does is charming; I am so attracted by her goodness, her intelligence—and what a voice she has! She must be idolised in your country, is she not? I beg of you to tell all who take any interest in your visit to Scotland that I admire your Queen exceedingly. I want her and her subjects to know it. I am not of an enthusiastic nature, nor does my temperament impel me to exaggerate. This time I am enthusiastic and eloquent—how queer the words sound on my lips those who have not lived by my side cannot understand."

The light blue eyes looked more and more deeply into mine, as if they sought in my soul the secrets of my race and of the distant land from which I came. "Tell me more about Roumania," she said. "It is a country whose mysteries authors and guide-books have not yet exhausted. I am astonished that British travellers do not oftener seek pleasure and exotic surroundings in your country. Do write a book on Roumania—invite the English to your native land; they do so much good to all the countries whose climate and scenery lure them to long excursions and frequent visits. Just think how much Italy and Switzerland owe to the English. Do invite them to the banks of the Danube—I would be *so* pleased to observe the result, and I have many reasons for wishing it. They like best those

parts of the globe in which they can either create history, or call to life again historical deeds of long-forgotten days. So search your records well through, stir up your sleeping heroes, and the English will come to you. But you must also offer them trout-fishing and mountain climbing as an inducement. . . . Some of your national legends remind me of Indian folk-lore. I am studying Hindustani just now. Don't laugh—I am very old, but I have always lived up to a precept which I advise you to remember: We must always live as if we were immortal."

In my opinion all the power and the happiness of Queen Victoria's life and influence are explained in those words. With a quiet, melancholy smile she added:

"Then death will come to us like a radiant surprise, a most wonderful and unlooked-for boon; then will the joy of seeing again those we have loved be most startling and complete."

A slight rustling, a soft sound filled the room, and Queen Victoria tried to rise as she sought the help of her thick ebony walking-cane. All the other persons were standing, as, beautifully clad in a dark red velvet gown, her small head illumined by a haze of gold, the Princess of Wales advanced. The swan-like whiteness of her visage and bare arms were visible in the dimness of the silvery twilight as, with steps that glided as softly as the sea foam on the beach, she came to the aged Queen, and after

fondly embracing her, arranged the folds of the black dress and replaced the ebony cane on the arm of the chair. Her mother-in-law said in low tones:

"Dear child, we have been looking forward to your presence. I have invited a young and lovely Irish girl to sing us some Irish songs. Beatrice says she has an excellent voice, and I want Elizabeth to be pleased. We are one and all delighted with Elizabeth. But I am talking away and the girl must begin to sing."

Then the young voice went forth pure and powerful, while all the rest of the room lay in darkness; two candles only flickered on the piano and stood out like big pins of light. The harmony wandered on, like a rush of warriors in the glare of the rising sun, then moaned over the bleeding throng, and returned bruised and weary under the cold gaze of the moon. Ever and anon a piercing cry came from the musician's lips. These were songs of wild rebellious Erin she was singing; the clamour of her soul shrieking for liberty was lifted up in woe. A solemn stillness had fallen upon the august listeners, on the group of mighty ladies and lords, as the voice threw out its imperious flood of protestation and defiance, thrusting its music into the silence of that hallowed room as with daggers, like the flashes of a spear.

We all knew that the hour was one of great import to the young singer, perhaps the hour which would decide all her after-life, the culminating-point of her career, her fate. She sang in the presence of

her Queen; and as the silvery notes rang through the azure twilight, we thought we could hear the mad throbbings of her heart, the beatings of her blood against temples and veins. All at once the headlong cadence fell and died away. A few words were murmured, words carefully uttered in hushed tones amid the empty spaces, so that the contrast between the Irish girl's excitement, the extraordinary force and talent she had displayed, and the apparent coldness with which her rendering of the song was received, would have seemed cruel had not the Princess of Wales approached and said some kind words of congratulation to the beautiful artist, whose strikingly hard, audacious profile seemed cut out clearly by the side of the soft fair visage that smiled encouragingly and voiced thanks for all.

"Carmen Sylva" in her turn said: "How well you sing, madame; and how very near your heart this music must be, because I cannot suppose any one could offer us a nobler specimen of the Irish fervour and emotions."

The lamps had now been brought, but large shades prevented them from bathing the whole room with light, and most of the people present remained invisible. Suddenly, in loud distinct tones, Queen Victoria said:

"I want to hear 'The Wearing of the Green.'"

The title bore no significance whatever to our ears, but an uncomfortable murmur floated through the audience, and I could even discern a few whispered

words such as: "Oh, no, impossible . . . here . . ." However, the Queen repeated her request.

"Sing that song, please. I wish to hear it very much indeed. Will you do that for me?"

"Yes, madame," answered the beautiful Irish girl firmly. Her face was set, and her eyes shone with a strange glow. From the very instant she began to sing I grasped the meaning of the constraint and uneasiness with which the Queen's proposition had been received. In the full glare of a neighbouring lamp the lovely young woman, whose features were now fully revealed in the glory of an audacious perfection, began to sing. Her voice swelled out in accents as fiery and glowing as the flames of lurid torches, as furious as the harsh cries of multitudes raised up by wrath to a pitch of passion; fearful indeed, but magnificent.

The song she sang was a popular anthem, a shriek for mercy and pity, a defiant challenge from the weak to the strong—something startling and appalling like a thunderbolt that falls on the bosom of the tempestuous sea and awakens thousands of echoes from its billows. All these waves of vengeance, all the cries, all the withering rage which that young voice poured forth, came to die like foam at the feet of the quiet Queen. Once again I saw that peculiar expression in her eyes, that expression of clearness and limpidity, as if those eyes were made of fresh air and water and could blow away or wipe out each tear, all anguish, every one of the complaints

uttered by t..e desperate song. It was evidently hastening towards its end—the stanzas quickened their faltering pace, and each measure was full to the brim of vehement desire for justice and victory. We were then one and all wrapped up in the same thought: what would we say after the young girl had ceased—who would dare to break the silence this time? What would follow?

When the dreaded pause came we almost held our breath; no word was spoken, no sound heard. Then an incident, unexpected as it was charming, took place. With dignified yet affectionate alacrity the Queen of Roumania came over and knelt by the side of Queen Victoria's huge chair, and taking both her hands caressingly between her own, said:

"What a very great Queen you must be, and how sure of the affection of your subjects, to be able to hear such a song sung in your presence! In fact, were you not really a great Queen, no one would have dared to obey you to-day."

"But the song is splendid," said Queen Victoria, "and I wanted you to hear it. Besides, I am very fond of the Irish, you may be sure of that;" then, turning towards the young girl, "I thank you with all my heart, my dear. You have given me great pleasure and been the occasion of my receiving from the Queen of Roumania a compliment which I shall never forget."

At dinner that evening I was seated by the side of the Duke of Clarence, not far from the Queen,

whose right-hand neighbour was "Carmen Sylva." The Princess of Wales beamed radiantly upon us from the opposite side of the table on the left of her Royal mother-in-law. Queen Victoria spoke little, but followed the conversation with evident interest.

"Mamma," said the Princess of Wales, "look well at Mdlle. Vacaresco, and try to remember who she is like—remember Florence and the ladies you have seen there. *I* judge of the likeness from a photograph."

Queen Victoria's glance rested on my face. "Yes, Alsa dear, I see what or rather who you mean. But would Mdlle. Vacaresco care about resembling that lady—almost one of her own countrywomen? I have noticed when abroad that people belonging to the same race appear to be very like each other."

"The lady that we allude to is very handsome," said the Princess of Wales to me with ready tact, "so you need not be offended."

"Surely, dear, that lady is handsome—much handsomer than you, my child. I guess you already know to whom I refer. Yet I read disappointment in your face. You do not like the idea of being compared to her."

I bowed in mute acquiescence. The Queen continued.

"Her face is beautiful, it is true, but it lacks life and expression, which yours does not, though it is less striking and harmonious. And you prefer wearing your soul in your face to any perfection

mere beauty can confer—I would do the same in your place. I do not like vacuous or expressionless faces; yet the ideal in England and most of the northern countries is in favour of a countenance which is drilled to hide every emotion, even the natural curiosity of an intellect athirst for knowledge and comprehension. The southern poets would laugh outright at *our* heroines, whose secret aspirations no one can read in face or gesture."

When we passed into the drawing-room after the meal, the conversation around us waxed rapid and full of spirit, though in a key of discreet undertone. Lord Rosse was at that moment the Minister in attendance on the Queen, and told us how hard he had worked with her Majesty in the morning, as he was the one member in the Cabinet who had the management of the Indies. "So you are the Ministre *pour les Indes*," said I. "Oh! then you might accomplish my warmest dream. I wish to be Vice-Queen of the Indies in my own right, if only for a few days. I want to ride on a white elephant, who would kneel to drink in the Ganges; to see the land of splendour and diamonds, the land of fakirs and innumerable temples. Oh, I have hesitated long between the fascinations of the extremely modern and the excessively old civilisations, the two opposite poles of the world as to history and religion. I had ardently desired to become Empress of the United States, Empress of North America altogether. But since I am here, and such a good

opportunity is offered me, why I prefer the Indies."

At this Lord Rosse laughed, and we took up the sentence and repeated the words: "Empress of the United States!" in tones so loud that all the company were startled, and to our great confusion *our* Queen put a finger on her lips, while the Princess of Wales smiled approval, saying:

"Oh, no, do not stop, the Queen likes young people to be merry. Look, here is my mother, who is coming to inquire into the cause of your mirth."

Surely, the Princess was right. Queen Victoria herself came up to Lord Rosse and asked:

"What have these little girls been saying which makes you all so gay, Lord Rosse? May I not know?"

"Certainly, madam, here is a young lady who desires me to ask your Majesty to nominate her Vice-Queen of the Indies for a few days, or even a few hours."

"What for?" asked the Queen, in an amused and eager way.

I explained to her my childish day-dream, and how often I had longed to see and thoroughly explore that distant realm of light, the empire whose gentle, placid Empress stood before me, modestly clad in a plain black silk gown.

"These stones are from India," said the Queen, as she pointed to the huge diamond necklace which glittered on her bosom. "A gift from the town of

Bombay. You are right, my child," she continued. "Like you, I too have longed to see those lands so far away and so marvellous. I am the ruler, but no more than you have I enjoyed the sight of my subjects, of the beautiful cities with their rivers where big elephants kneel to drink. Your wish must be granted. You are a poet, so you will have all that you desire. Sleep quietly this night, and while you sleep I will sign an invisible decree which will give you the power to fly towards the distant paradise of your dreams and be a queen there, and you shall play with the birds and rubies and feel you possess them all, much more than I possess them myself."

"Is your Majesty aware," interposed Lord Rosse, "that Mdlle. Vacaresco had just thought also of becoming Empress of the United States?"

"Oh, what a singular, what an unexpected title!" exclaimed the Queen. "I am gratified to have heard these extraordinary words coupled together: Empress—United States. Is it a presage? Oh, how could it come about? The United States and Empire! Could you live to see that?" The Queen stood dumb-struck, plunged in serious thought, then turned away slowly, still murmuring: "Empress of the United States—what an extraordinary idea! What a title, is it a prophecy? the United States a monarchy!"

"My mother wishes you to remember all your life that you spent your birthday with her," said

Princess Beatrice next morning, as I entered her drawing-room. "Your Queen has told us that this is your birthday. . ." and the Princess pointed to a big volume on the table. "This is the Queen's Journal. She has written a dedication and her autograph on the flyleaf."

I ran up to my room with my treasure. In the corridor I was startled to meet Queen Victoria herself, and I endeavoured to thank her.

"Please don't," said the Queen. "I have a boon to ask from you. I want you to write some verses of yours in an album, verses appropriate to the book. But I am keeping you here. Run upstairs; you must have letters to write, and I also am in a hurry."

"My maid is lucky to-day, madam," said I. "She has had but one idea since she left Roumania —to catch a glimpse of Queen Victoria; and there she is at the end of the gallery, looking at your Majesty with greedy eyes."

"I will say a word to her, poor thing;" and before I could prevent the Queen from taking so much trouble, she had briskly walked towards the terrified maid, and was actually saying to her:

"I have come to ask you whether you like my home, and if you have all you require here."

The woman, whose utterance was choked by tears of gratitude, could find no answer; and when the Queen turned to go she saw that my own eyes were moist at being witness to an act of such gracious sympathy.

The Queen took leave of us in the evening. "We shall see very little of each other to-morrow morning. Do not forget Balmoral. I will send my album up to your room, and remember that what you write in it will create a lasting link between the ancient Queen of England and the girl poet of Roumania."

I sat alone in my chamber pondering over the events of the past two days, and felt a pang at the thought of leaving this hospitable dwelling. Around me, one by one, the inmates of the Castle were sinking to sleep. There I stood in the darkness with clasped hands and a heart full of reverence and regret.

A slight tap at the door aroused me, and a footman walked in, bearing a black leather book. A tiny key fell from its lock as I tried to open it. I lit my lamp and entered into communion with the slumbering souls whose memory lingered within its covers. The book was a cemetery, and as the passing winds arouse the murmur of leaves above the graves, so as I turned these pages a rustling sound awakened the dead. I knew them almost all by name. Here was the Emperor Frederick III., his last letter and his tomb; here, too, the Grand Duchess of Hesse, verses written by her hand, and several letters from her; here also memorial stones were represented which bore the names of all those whom the Queen had mourned and loved—the same tribute was paid to the humblest as to the greatest. A few verses from "In Memoriam" were written in

Tennyson's own hand; a tender missive from the mother of the Queen to her daughter; withered flowers, a tuft of heather taken from the wedding bouquet presented by Prince Albert to his wife, and two of the flowers that had been placed under his hand before he was laid in his coffin—all the homage rendered by a soul at anchor in the harbours of faith and hope, to the souls who travel and float in eternal bliss, was visible on the pages of that moving little book. My whole night was spent in its perusal; this small volume gave the final touches to the portrait of Queen Victoria which was to remain for ever in my mind. . . .

"You have written exactly what I would have liked you to write," she said when I stooped over her hand next morning in the white hall of Balmoral Castle, and her Majesty gently kissed my forehead, saying, "Thank you for *their* sake and for mine."

So we passed away from the stately but homelike Castle. The mists were so thin that the whole landscape danced before our eyes. I turned my head to look behind and kept my gaze fixed on the massive tower where the standard of England floated.

Something was working in my thoughts, something that waved to and fro like that glorious standard whose vivid colour soared so high. Something spoke in my heart, and questioning said: "Have I not seen two women in one, two queens in a single queen? and which of these two women do

the English most revere? The grandmother, ever ready to receive and distribute affection, or the quiet guardian of the little cemetery, that small black book I had loved so much: and which of the two queens is the truest queen—the one who toils till midnight, till the abundant oil in her lamp is spent, allowing no fault or flaw in her government to be overlooked, or the indulgent sovereign who listened in serene enjoyment to the rebellious song that had endeavoured to kindle revolution?"

I had seen two women in one, two queens in a single queen.

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